

East of Suez

by

Alice Perrin

edited with an introduction and notes
by **Melissa Edmundson Makala**

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INTRODUCTION

Alice Perrin's writing on India and Anglo-Indians rivaled the best of Kipling. Yet many readers will not recognize her name, despite the fact that, in her time, she was critically well-respected and excelled as an author of best-selling novels and short stories. As a writer, she was equally at home in the genres of romance, supernatural, humor, and horror. And while her works consistently offer readers entertaining stories and engaging, often tragic, characters, Perrin is also careful to represent the social complexity of the time in which she lived.

Perrin was intimately connected to the world of British Colonial India. She was born in India to a family who had been an integral part of the British Raj since its early days. Later, she would base her many novels and short stories on her own experiences in India. Her works belong to the vast body of literature produced by the British 'memsahibs', a body of literature which would become one of the most important outlets for social commentary on empire in the history of British literature during the final decades of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century. Because her writing spans the heyday of the British Raj, Perrin's work, in particular, is an essential part of Anglo-Indian fiction.

Perrin's novels and short stories offer readers the full spectrum of the British experience in India. She takes us into the 'official' worlds of British imperial administration, as well as into the domestic world of the Anglo-Indian bungalow. In her stories, readers see the daily lives of her fellow British countrymen and women, and the complexity of their interactions with native Indians, interactions that represent the complex and at times tenuous influence which the British had in India.

The Life and Work of Alice Perrin

Alice Perrin was born in India in 1867, the daughter of Major General John Innes Robinson, of the Bengal Cavalry, and Bertha Beidermann Robinson.¹ After her education in England, Perrin

¹ John Innes Robinson served in the Bengal Cavalry from 1849-1889. In October 1861, he married Bertha Beidermann in Ramoan, Co. Antrim.

married Charles Perrin (d. 1931), an engineer in the India Public Works Department, in 1886, and the couple returned to India for the next sixteen years. They had a son, Lancelot Charles Perrin (born c.1889), who later worked in the Irrigation Branch of the Indian Public Works and married Vera Alexandrina St. John in November 1913.² After the Perrins' return to England, Charles worked for the London Water Board and the Ministry of Health. Perrin's career as a popular Anglo-Indian novelist and short story writer began with the two-volume novel *Into Temptation*, published in 1894. She continued publishing novels every two to three years until her last novel, *Other Sheep*, was published in 1932, two years before her death in Vevey, Switzerland, in 1934. In total, she published seventeen novels, many of which focus on the British colonial experience in India, such as *The Spell of the Jungle* (1902), *The Anglo-Indians* (1912), *The Happy Hunting Ground* (1914), *Star of India* (1919), and *Government House* (1925).

Like many other Anglo-Indian women, the boredom and isolation of life in India led Perrin to authorship. In a conversation with Douglas Sladen, she recalled:

I think I took to writing from sheer need of occupation. When I married my husband in India, as a girl of eighteen, we were sent to a place in the jungle where he had charge of an enormous aqueduct which was under construction. He had several Coopers Hill assistants under him, not one of whom was married, and I was the only English woman in the locality. There was no station – or permanent settlement; our houses were temporary erections of mud, and we were miles from the railway. The landscape consisted of a sea of yellow grass about the height of a man, and there was only one road, which lay behind our bungalow – the grand trunk

Bertha was the widow of Col. Swyny of the British army and daughter of the Rev. G.A. Beidermann, Rector of Dauntsey, Wiltshire. ("Marriages," *Gentleman's Magazine* 211 [November 1861]: 559).

² According to a brief announcement in the *Times* for 19 June 1928:

"Lancelot Charles Perrin, aged 39, was found dead, and Annie Perrin, 35, unconscious, in a gas-filled room at Ossington-street, Bayswater" (15). This may explain the vague reference in her *Times* obituary: "With a high sense of duty she combined a courage which carried her through private sorrows of no ordinary kind..." (9).

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road that is the backbone of India. I began to write here, just to amuse myself, and then when we went to less isolated spots, I gained confidence and used to send little articles and turn-overs to the *Pioneer* – the principal Indian daily paper. These were nearly always accepted, and so I took courage and wrote a novel called *Into Temptation*, which ran through that prehistoric magazine *London Society*, long ago defunct. The book came out in two volumes and had very fair notices. Then I wrote another called *Late in Life*, which ran serially in an Indian weekly, off-shoot of the *Pioneer*, and in England through the *Belgravia*, and then came out in two volumes. So you may imagine – or rather, realise – how long ago I began! Both these novels are now to appear revised and corrected in Messrs. Methuen's 7d. series.

However, I did not receive the financial encouragement I had hoped for from these first efforts, and I lost heart. For nearly ten years I wrote nothing but a few Indian short stories. Then when my husband was offered an appointment at home, and we retired before we had 'done' our full time in India, I collected these stories, and they came out under the title of *East of Suez*. The book was a success and since then I have written and have been published steadily.

I am deeply interested in India, in the people and their religions, and histories and social systems, and as I was sixteen years in the country I had an opportunity of receiving lasting impressions, and of gaining invaluable experience. I come of a family which has been officially connected with India for five generations. My great grandfather³ was with

³ Perrin's great-grandfather was Sir George Abercrombie Robinson, 1st Bart (1758-1832). He served in the Bengal Army from 1779-1802 and as Military Auditor-General in 1798. Robinson became Director of the East India Company in 1808 and held the position until 1829. He served as Chairman of the Company in 1820 and 1826. Robinson's sons continued the family's influence in India, both in military and administrative roles. The Robinson Baronetcy of Batts House, Somerset, which began with Sir George Abercrombie was passed down to his son, George Best Robinson (1797-1855), and George Best's son, George Abercrombie Robinson (1826-1891). On the death of George Abercrombie in 1891, the baronetcy passed to William Le Fleming Robinson (1830-1895), and then

Lord Cornwallis, on his staff, at the taking of Seringapatam, and the surrender to Lord Cornwallis of Tippoo Sahib's two little sons as hostages. He was afterwards Chairman of the old East India Company – known in those days as John Company.⁴

In 1925, the Perrins moved to Switzerland. There, they hosted several British writers, including Perrin's fellow ghost story writer, Algernon Blackwood.

Although Perrin's novels are traditional romances based on her experiences in India, she was also an accomplished writer of ghost stories. Like her contemporary Bithia Croker, she chose to keep her supernatural writing within the genre of the short story. Perrin's first supernatural tale, 'Caulfield's Crime,' was published in the December 1892 issue of *Belgravia*, and her ghost stories appear in the collections *East of Suez* (1901), *Red Records* (1906), *Tales That Are Told* (1917), and *Rough Passages* (1926). The continued success she found as a short story writer, at a time when collections of short stories were not as sure sellers as novels in the publishing world, surprised (and at times baffled) many of her contemporaries. Where authors struggled to publish in one literary form, she succeeded at both. In a 4 March 1907 letter to his literary agent, J.B. Pinker (1863-1922), Arnold Bennett complained that he had not been offered as much from Chatto and Windus as Perrin, who had been advanced £150 for *A Free Solitude* and £50 for a collection of short stories (presumably *Red Records*). Bennett went on to calculate:

Now at a royalty of 5d per copy, they would have to sell nearly 7,500 copies to get back their money on the novel. Whereas the royalties on 2500 copies of *The Ghost* will only be about £50. Why can they afford to be, comparatively, so generous when they buy outright as they do from Mrs.

to two of Alice Perrin's brothers, Ernest William Robinson (1862-1924) and Douglas Innes Robinson (1863-1944). Douglas served in the British army and was officially commissioned a lieutenant in the Garrison Artillery in January 1890. As Douglas had no heirs, the baronetcy became extinct in 1944.

⁴ Perrin quoted in Sladen, *Twenty Years of My Life* (London: Constable, 1915) pp. 122-23.

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Perrin? This lady is a particular friend of mine & I am sure she told me the truth as to the price. They offered her £100, and it was I who urged her to stick it out. If everything is quite on the square, the inference is that Mrs. Perrin's books sell three times as well as mine: which I do not believe.⁵

Though not quite three times Bennett's novel, Chatto and Windus's sales figures verify that Perrin's *A Free Solitude* sold more than twice as many copies as *The Ghost*.⁶ Despite his concern over sales, and perhaps a bit jealous over the fact that he was being outsold by a "lady romancer," Bennett did encourage Perrin in her career and freely offered her professional advice. One area where they generally differed, however, was over Perrin's choice to pursue publication of her short story collections instead of longer fiction. In an 8 November 1908 letter to Pinker, Bennett reluctantly admits that she had achieved success, despite his advice:

I did my very best to put her in the way of salvation; but she would not have it. She says she once went to you (apropos of *East of Suez*, I think) and that you snubbed her so effectually that she would never dare to approach you again. She must have felt hurt, whether she was or not. This is her version, to which I attach no importance; but she does. I expect you told her that there was no hope for short stories. In general there isn't. But it did just happen that *East of Suez* sold well, & brought her into prominence. With Kipling, Barrie, Crockett, Quiller-Couch, Arthur Morrison, Doyle, Jacobs, & sundry others she is an example of a reputation built on short stories—which publishers, who ought to know their business, will never touch if they can help it. If it is any consolation to you, she has no agent at all,—or had not when I last saw her.⁷

The *Times* obituary for Perrin gave a positive estimation of her writing career and offered some additional details of her person-

⁵ *Letters of Arnold Bennett*, James Hepburn, ed., Vol. 1 (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 78.

⁶ For more information on these sales figures, see *Letters of Arnold Bennett* (James Hepburn, ed.), Vol. 1, p. 80n.

⁷ *Letters of Arnold Bennett*, pp. 105-06.

ality, saying, 'She was tall and handsome with an exuberant sense of humour and a gift of conversation which made her the best of good company'.⁸ The obituary goes on to say that Perrin was supportive of other writers, 'an excellent literary critic, and a most generous and large-hearted admirer of many authors whose merits she had been among the first to discern'.⁹ After the Perrins returned from India around 1900, Alice became involved in many London literary societies, including the Society of Women Journalists, the Royal Literary Fund, and the Incorporated Society of Authors, Playwrights, and Composers. Perrin was also active in the Women Writers' Club and spoke at many of their meetings. According to G.B. Burgin's *Memoirs of a Clubman* (1921), Perrin and Mrs. Baillie Reynolds¹⁰ were two of the leading figures at the club. He remembers his visits to the club fondly, 'At these debates, Mrs. Baillie Reynolds, Mrs. Alice Perrin and a host of other accomplished women writers generally speak, and they all speak well. The speeches of the women members are full of humour and, as a rule, much livelier than those of the visitors'.¹¹ Burgin goes on to differentiate Perrin and Reynolds as professionals who take their work seriously, as opposed to other would-be women authors of the day: 'The great charm about the Women Writers is that they are all workers, whereas at another women's club with literary pretensions there are occasional social butterflies who get someone else to write their books, and pose as literary characters on the strength of them'.¹² Perrin herself reiterated Burgin's point in an interview included in Meredith Starr's *The Future of the Novel* (1921),

⁸ 'Mrs. Alice Perrin', *The Times* (February 15, 1934), p. 9.

⁹ 'Mrs. Alice Perrin', *The Times*, p. 9.

¹⁰ Mrs. Baillie Reynolds (1861-1939), who formerly published under her maiden name of G[ertrude] M[innie] Robins, was a fellow supernatural author to Perrin. Her first novel was the three-volume *Keep My Secret* (1886), which was followed by several other novels throughout the 1890s, including *The Silence Broken: A Story of the Unexplained* (1897). Her most famous ghost story collection, *The Relations and What They Related*, was serialized in *The Lady's Realm* in 1902 and published in book form by the end of the year. For more on Reynolds, see Richard Dalby's introduction in his Sarob Press edition of *The Relations and What They Related and Other Weird Tales* (2003), volume six in his 'Mistresses of the Macabre' series.

¹¹ G.B. Burgin, *Memoirs of a Clubman*, 2nd ed. (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1922), p. 284.

¹² Burgin, *Memoirs*, p. 284.

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which included his conversations with several ‘renowned authors’. In a passage that could be considered a brief summation of her theory on the composition of fiction, she stresses that writing should be considered an art, and as such, should only be undertaken with a commitment to hard work and artistic integrity:

Novel writing is about the only profession into which people will rush without training, or study, or practice. *Given the talent*, which is no more to be acquired than the shape of one’s nose or the colour of one’s eyes, it is an Art that can be learnt, that must be learnt, since genuine success can never be achieved without a working knowledge of the tools that have been given us....Yet novels get accepted and published (never mind how!) that betray the writer’s ignorance of form, technique, and construction, not to mention the word grammar; and though from their very spontaneity such productions may meet with an ephemeral success, that success cannot continue because it is not founded on real work. It is novel-writing ‘by ear.’¹³

In the interview, Perrin shows a good understanding of the literary marketplace and offers her predictions on future trends in the publishing world: ‘If printers and binders and paper-makers continue to obtain the large wages and prices we hear of, it seems to me that the novel must come down in price, since it would be quite possible to produce even cheaper bindings, less good print, and more horrible paper than is being “put out” at present; more millions of the public would buy, and the incurable novel reader would rejoice’.¹⁴ Perrin thus predicts an increased circulation of novels and the rise of the cheap paperback which would remain popular for the rest of the century.

Perrin’s generosity to other writers extended into current cultural interests as well, and through her ghost stories, she became well known among the Spiritualists of the early twentieth century. She was involved in the infamous report by Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge, published in the December 1919 issue of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, which was dedicated to

¹³ Perrin quoted in Meredith Starr, *The Future of the Novel* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1921), pp. 120-21.

¹⁴ Perrin quoted in Starr, *Future of the Novel*, p. 120.

reports on a series of séances held by the professional medium, Mrs. Osbourne Leonard, between August 1916 and August 1917.¹⁵ In an attempt to solve contrasting opinions about 'Knowledge of Matters Unknown to Sitters', the two women contacted Perrin and five other 'well qualified' people (including Helen Salter, editor of the journal) asking for their opinions 'as to whether, in view of the words spoken at the sitting, [they] must conclude that both men were dead, or one dead and the other alive on February 21st 1917'.¹⁶ Perrin had a continuing friendship with Radclyffe Hall and Troubridge. After the publication of *Adam's Breed* in 1926, Hall hosted a dinner for Perrin, Violet Hunt,¹⁷ and several other writers. Perrin and Hunt also served on the British committee of the Prix Femina Vie Heureuse, which presented an annual award for the year's best British novel.¹⁸

Literary Reception

The reviews of Alice Perrin's novels and short story collections were consistently positive, and her books sold well throughout her lifetime. Contemporary critics mention that she avoided the pitfalls of other popular romance writers of the time, with one reviewer of *Idolatry* (1909) in *World Today* commenting, 'Alice Perrin is making a reputation for a type of stories of Anglo-Indian life, which are neither of the flirtatious-widow type nor of the mystic-devotee order'.¹⁹ Many reviewers single out Perrin's short stories as particularly well-developed, especially when compared to other women authors of the day. A critic for the *Standard* remarked, 'Mrs. Perrin is one of the finest short-story writers we have...Her work possesses rare sympathy, delicacy, and reticence. No woman-writer of to-day has ever told the secrets hidden in the heart of a young

¹⁵ For more on the debate over this article, see Michael Baker's *Our Three Selves: The Life of Radclyffe Hall* (1985), pp. 103-109.

¹⁶ Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge, 'Knowledge of Matters Unknown to Sitters', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, Vol. 30 (December 1919), p. 543.

¹⁷ Like Perrin, Violet Hunt (1862-1942) wrote supernatural tales, many of which were collected in *Tales of the Uneasy* (1911) and *More Tales of the Uneasy* (1925). She also founded the Women Writers' Suffrage League.

¹⁸ Baker, 182.

¹⁹ Review of *Idolatry*. *World Today* Vol. 16 (1909), p. 563.

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man with more uncanny subtleness and cleverness.²⁰ A review of *A Free Solitude* (1907) in *The Bystander* noted Perrin's ability to find new Anglo-Indian themes, instead of rehashing old plots, a bad habit of many other writers of the time:

There is an exclusively Indian atmosphere about the story which, though dealing with the lives of Europeans, yet is entirely outside that chain of cliques — the society of Anglo-Indian officialdom — which has provided novelists of Eastern life with the bulk of their material heretofore. Miss Perrin, may, therefore, be said to possess a place in fiction peculiarly and enviably her own, which makes one await with pleasure each of her successive volumes'.²¹

Both Perrin's Anglo-Indian novels and short stories drew praise for their realistic description of India. A brief announcement of the publication of Perrin's *The Stronger Claim* (published in America in 1910) in the 12 February 1910 issue of the *New York Times* credited the author with tackling 'the problem of inter-racial marriage in India'.²² A year later, the *New York Times* for 22 October 1911 included a review of Perrin's *The Charm* (1910) which claimed that her insight into Indian life and her unflinching look at Anglo-Indian social life were unmatched in literature of the day:

A clever presentation of one phase of Anglo-Indian life is made by Alice Perrin in "The Charm"...It deals with the mixture of races and classes that has been going on in India for so many generations and with some of the social and personal problems that result....Miss Perrin seems to possess remarkable knowledge of the region and the people of whom she writes, and, in particular, her comprehension of the psychology of the Eurasian is apparently the result of much observation and thought. Not even Kipling has written more convincingly, though with more vigor and picturesqueness, of the heart and the soul of that queer

²⁰ Advertisement for *Red Records*, in *Red Records* (London: Chatto & Windus, Colonial Edition, 1906).

²¹ Review of *A Free Solitude*, *The Bystander* (3 April 1907), p. 25.

²² Review of *The Stronger Claim*, *New York Times* (12 February 1910), p. BR12.

product of the meeting of West and East. There are many of these, of varying grades of mixture, in Miss Perrin's book, and they are all delineated with an understanding that spares not, though it is ever tolerant and sympathetic.²³

An advertisement for *Rough Passages* from *The Argosy* (1926) cites the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* as saying that the collection possessed 'A wide knowledge of Indian life and a deep insight to the mysticism of the Orient'.

Upon the release of *East of Suez* (1901), critics immediately began making comparisons between Perrin and Kipling. *Punch* compared *East of Suez* to the best of Kipling's stories:

The authoress gives us a collection of cleverly-written stories which, the Baron thinks it not too much to say, for graphic description, sharp incisive sketches of character, and effective dramatic situation, are second only to the *Plain Tales* by Rudyard Kipling; while two or three of them run even the best of Kipling's uncommonly close. Possessing the great merit of brevity, the reader, with a clear three-quarters of an hour ere the dressing bell rings, can get through any one of these stories in that space of time, only he will find his literary appetite so sharpened for another tale that only a still appetite for dinner will compel him to put aside the book as one "to be continued in his next" leisure moment.²⁴

Another reviewer of *East of Suez* praised Perrin's ability to maintain both the reader's suspense and the quality of story-telling throughout the entire collection:

The whole collection maintains an even level of excellence. There is not that inequality one frequently finds in a volume of short stories. The author has caught the atmosphere of the East, and one feels it in her work. She does not weary the reader with prolonged passages of description, but suggests a complete picture in a few words, which is better. Some of her stories show considerable power in the region

²³ Review of *The Charm*, 'For East is East', *New York Times* (22 October 1911), p. LS646.

²⁴ Review of *East of Suez*, *Punch* Vol. 121 (23 October 1901), p. 296.

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of the weird, and the supernatural, and have that quality of horror which ensures their being read, and talked about. I felt constrained, detached stories as they are, to read the greater number through at one sitting.²⁵

After the release of *Red Records* in 1906, the *Times* proclaimed that 'Readers of "East of Suez" and "The Waters of Destruction" will not be disappointed to find Mrs. Perrin writing again of India. The book is full of fine descriptive work and moving drama.'²⁶ In her obituary, the *Times* once again praised Perrin's ability to capture the physical characteristics of India for British readers, stating: 'Mrs. Perrin was a realist, and all her work bears the stamp of sincerity and love of truth which characterized her as an individual. She wrote a simple, unforced style, and the reader feels keenly the heat, the dust, the moonrise, the night calls, and all the sights and sounds and smells of the unchanging East'.²⁷ *The Bookman*, a journal which tended to be a bit more critical than most other journals when it came to reviewing Perrin's work, began its review of *Red Records* with the observation that 'Comparisons with Mr. Kipling are inevitable, but scarcely necessary, because Mrs. Perrin, though dealing with the India that Kipling has immortalized, deals with it in a way that is peculiarly her own'.²⁸ However, the reviewer ultimately calls *Red Records* an inferior work to *East of Suez*, which is termed 'a remarkable work, charged with much that was absolutely fresh to the Western reader',²⁹ saying that Perrin's themes in her second collection are too unoriginal and redundant, focusing too much on Indian superstition and the theme of fate.³⁰ The reviewer

²⁵ Review of *East of Suez*, in Harold Tremayne's *Dross* (London: Anthony Treherne, 1901).

²⁶ Review of *Red Records*, in *Red Records* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1906), prelim.

²⁷ 'Mrs. Alice Perrin', *The Times* (February 15, 1934), p. 9.

²⁸ Review of *Red Records*, *The Bookman* Vol. 30 (June 1906), p. 116.

²⁹ Review of *Red Records*, *The Bookman* Vol. 30 (June 1906), p. 116.

³⁰ This review complicates Bhupal Singh's assertion in *A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction* (London: 1934) that Perrin was not interested in writing ironic tales. The reviewer also criticizes Perrin for missing the mark in terms of the eeriness created by the supernatural, 'weird' tales and concludes that the reader is left reading stories with predictable plots. In another *Bookman* review from 1910, titled 'Plot Ownership and Some Recent Novels', Perrin's *The Stronger Claim* comes under the same

singles out “‘Moore’,” as an exception, and grants that Perrin, even at her worst, writes stories that ‘have in them something that differentiates them from the efforts of the rank-and-file of our women story-tellers’.³¹

Likewise, *Punch*’s review of *Rough Passages* praised Perrin’s writing ability, and warned other aspiring fiction writers who attempted to follow in her literary footsteps:

“...you don’t need genius to write for the magazines.” But...there are other qualities which you do need, and these Mrs. Perrin has in full measure. A model for the young aspirant, in fact; which means the nearer you get the better, and not that you can take a six-months’ correspondence course and write like Mrs. Perrin. For she is an old hand at the game and has the rules at her finger-ends. All these stories, I should add, are well and truly laid in Indian soil, a sufficient guarantee that their local colour will be right and that your perusal of them will be pleasantly informative as well as enjoyable.³²

One of the best and most accurate appraisals of Perrin’s work is found in her *Times* obituary:

For many years she delighted her countrymen and women with her novels of Indian and British-Indian life, and she instructed them also. For she was steeped in the political and social history of the English in India, and to that foundation she added an intimate knowledge of their daily life, their troubles, and their joys. Her books are in fact a valuable contribution to an understanding of modern Indian history. Times have changed, outwardly at least; but in essentials Mrs. Perrin’s types are the same to-day as when she created them, as all who know anything of British-Indian life will agree; and those who do not can still learn more from her novels than from most political and

criticism, as the reviewer accuses her of recycling a well-worn plot as the basis of the novel (p. 205).

³¹ Review of *Red Records*, *The Bookman* Vol. 30 (June 1906), p. 117.

³² Review of *Rough Passages*, *Punch* Vol. 170 (19 May 1926), p. 536.

polemical writings.³³

Twentieth-Century Responses

In *A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction* (1934), Bhupal Singh includes Perrin under two categories, “Rudyard Kipling and His School” and “Novels of Anglo-Indian Life.”³⁴ Unfortunately, though this is one of the few extended critical considerations of her work, it is also one of the most factually flawed. In his appraisal, Singh fails to mention the publication of *Tales That Are Told* (1917), claiming instead that Perrin published only ‘three volumes of short stories’.³⁵ He lists *Red Records* as ‘published recently’³⁶ in 1928, when, in fact, this refers to the reprinting of the work, which originally appeared in 1906. For Singh, Perrin’s style and subject matter fall short when compared to Kipling, as he asserts that ‘she does not possess Kipling’s gift of literary craftsmanship’ and ‘lacks the satire, fun, and irony which distinguish Kipling’s tales’,³⁷ though he does not elaborate on what exactly comprises ‘literary craftsmanship’, and later praises the ‘sympathy...power of observation, and vivid description’ of both her short stories and novels.³⁸

To Perrin’s credit, ‘fun’ was not one of her prime objectives in her short story collections, and Singh’s estimation of her lack of satire and irony also misses the critical mark when one pays closer attention to her highly-ironic tales, many of which dominate *Red Records*, such as ‘The Evil Eye’, ‘Kismet’, ‘Justice’, and last but not least, a bitterly sad story titled ‘Fate’s Irony’. Singh continues his comparison of Perrin to Kipling by calling attention to their mutual interest in the supernatural, but again does not detail how

³³ ‘Mrs. Alice Perrin’, *The Times* (February 15, 1934), p. 9.

³⁴ Perrin’s work is listed along with that of Bithia Mary Croker, Maud Diver, Mrs. G.H. Bell (‘John Travers’), Mrs. E.W. Savi, Shelland Bradley, and several other brief mentions of now little-known Anglo-Indian writers. Singh describes the quality of these writers’ works as collectively ‘not very high’, especially when compared to ‘the master’ of Anglo-Indian fiction, Rudyard Kipling.

³⁵ Singh, *A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction*, p. 86.

³⁶ Singh, *A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction*, p. 86.

³⁷ Singh, *A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction*, p. 86.

³⁸ Singh, *A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction*, p. 88.

their stories and themes are similar. The most useful point Singh makes regarding Perrin lies in his recognition of her unique vantage point as the wife of an engineer, a perspective that allowed her to see a wide range of rural Indian life as well as the more conventional worlds of the more Anglo-centric cities and hill stations.

Critical dismissal of Perrin continued throughout the second half of the twentieth century. One of the more telling examples is R.C. Churchill's revised third edition of George Sampson's *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* (1970). In the original publication (1907) and the second edition (1941), Sampson briefly notes the 'interesting, though less important'³⁹ stories of Perrin, listing *East of Suez*, *The Anglo-Indians*, *Rough Passages*, and *Red Records* (though, like Singh, fails to mention *Tales That Are Told*). As sparse as this description is in its appraisal of the works of Anglo-Indian women writers, at least Sampson does record them in his history. On the other hand, R.C. Churchill erases them completely from his revised edition thirty years later. In the third edition, these authors receive no mention whatsoever, and Churchill instead spends the bulk of the section on Anglo-Indian literature trying to revive the reputation of Kipling, which by 1970 had ebbed considerably. He sets the objectives of the chapter (the one which received the most revision from Sampson's original work) by describing:

the literature produced during the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by a small body of British administrators, soldiers and missionaries who, during the working part of their lives, were residents in a remote and exotic sub-continent to which, in spite of every effort of love and duty, they could never, they often felt, in any real sense belong. This Anglo-Indian literature, whose highest achievement in the nineteenth century was in some of the work of Rudyard Kipling, was written for the public at home as much for the British in India.⁴⁰

Churchill's agenda becomes clear in these lines, as he sets the

³⁹ George Sampson, *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1941, revised 1970), p. 916.

⁴⁰ R.C. Churchill, *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1941, revised 1970), p. 734.

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parameters of Anglo-Indian literature, written by the ‘administrators, soldiers and missionaries’, and places women authors squarely outside of them. This omission is telling and represents a body of critical discourse on empire that marginalizes women writers in favor of promoting Kipling as a singular voice.

In earlier editions of the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, Sampson claims that Kipling lacked many essential elements of an Anglo-Indian writer, commenting that ‘some of [Kipling’s] adventures might have happened anywhere’, and that ‘he saw much’ but ‘divined little’.⁴¹ Sampson goes on to say that Kipling seldom tried to understand the Indian psyche and states that ‘his chief service to India is not that he made it understood, but that he made it interesting to a large general public which had never before given it serious attention’.⁴² As an alternative to Kipling, Sampson looks to the writing of Flora Annie Steel. Her works lack the ‘glow and glitter’ of Kipling but are instead ‘well-composed and seriously intended “novels of the Nineties” with India as their theme’.⁴³ Almost thirty years after these remarks, Churchill chooses to ignore the significance of these women authors, opting instead to spend the majority of the survey trying to revive Kipling’s literary reputation and reinstate him as the ‘master’ of Anglo-Indian literature. This, of course, is done at the expense of equally popular writers like Perrin, Croker, and Steel. These authors, who received much praise as contemporaries of Kipling (and, in Steel’s case, a suggestion of her writing as superior to Kipling) in contemporary reviews are reduced to the label of ‘lesser writers’.⁴⁴ After this description, Churchill wastes no time in citing George Orwell, who claimed that Kipling’s writing was ‘not only the best but almost the only literary picture we have. He has put on record an immense amount of stuff that one could otherwise only gather from verbal tradition or from unreadable regimental histories’.⁴⁵ Again, this is a misrepresentation of the literature of the time and one wonders why Churchill would have made such an argument immediately after listing authors that easily prove Orwell wrong. Instead of

⁴¹ Sampson, *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, p. 915.

⁴² Sampson, *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, p. 915.

⁴³ Sampson, *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, p. 915-16.

⁴⁴ Churchill, *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, p. 739.

⁴⁵ Orwell quoted in Churchill, *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, p. 740.

recognizing the complexity in the stories of women writers such as Alice Perrin, Churchill waits until 1924, with the publication of *A Passage to India*, to claim the first break with 'Kipling's simplified views of Anglo-India'.⁴⁶

In *Delusions and Discoveries* (1972), Benita Parry relegates Perrin's writing to the realm of predictable, biased Anglo-Indian romances of the day in a chapter that labels her and fellow writers as 'The Romancers: Five Lady Novelists'.⁴⁷ Parry argues that the novels of these authors are weakened by their pro-British viewpoints, which make their works predictable and repetitive.⁴⁸ Although this is true for many novels written by Perrin, the same rule does not apply to her short stories, which frequently challenge British racial and cultural assumptions of Indian natives. Parry only briefly mentions *East of Suez*, and her discussion of the collection is comprised of plot summaries which in no way do credit to Perrin's underlying social critiques found in these stories. No analysis is given to Perrin's supernatural tales, only Parry's statement that there are 'two or three ghost stories and the regulation tale of India's weird ascetics, The Fakir's Island'.⁴⁹ Parry also finds fault with this latter story because of its reliance on the idea of Englishmen being

⁴⁶ Churchill, *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, p. 741.

⁴⁷ In addition to the less-than-flattering description as 'Lady Romancers', the organization of Parry's book is meant to move from 'Delusions' to 'Discoveries' as Parry herself says in the Introduction, 'The arrangement of the chapters is not chronological and is intended to suggest an ascending order in complexity of vision' (p. 7). This means that the works of Anglo-Indian women novelists, whose works are morphed and condensed into the faceless group of 'romancers' (p. 6) are ranked as 'delusions', whereas later in the book, the works of Kipling and Forster are meant to be read as 'discoveries'.

⁴⁸ Susanne Howe, in *Novels of Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), has the same opinion of Perrin's work, which is not surprising given that she, like Parry, focuses solely on Perrin's more traditional novels and does not discuss her Anglo-Indian short stories. She ranks the fiction of Perrin (and Maud Diver) with the majority of the British colonizers who remained 'disinterested' and 'dispassionate and impersonal' (p. 36) throughout their time in India. One wonders if Howe or Parry ever read Perrin's contemporary reviews, which repeatedly say the exact opposite of these claims.

⁴⁹ Benita Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries: Studies on India in the British Imagination, 1880-1930* (London: Allen Lane, 1972), p. 75.

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superior to Indians. Parry's final summation does little to help the literary reputation of writers like Perrin:

The approach of these writers to emotional expressions, marital relationships and social tendencies shows an unquestioning and unswerving adherence to the bourgeois style of life then current. Their world was one of moral simplicities in which villains are brought to justice, adulterers punished and non-conformists driven to their knees, a tidy ordered world in which chastity and success are the household gods, status and prestige the icons....The ladies were enchanted by the prettier manifestations of the mysterious East, they acknowledged the achievements of Indian art and architecture and gestures of respect in the direction of Indian civilization and spirituality are common enough. But essentially, India was for them a dislocating experience, leaving them the prey of troubled sensations they could not interpret.⁵⁰

Although this claim may hold true for many of the Anglo-Indian novels written around the turn of the twentieth century, it does not hold up if we closely read the supernatural short stories of women such as Alice Perrin. Far from being 'the prey of troubled sensations', these women used the 'sensations' to their advantage by creating ghosts that embodied the complexities of the Anglo-Indian experience. In their stories, the villains (who are both Indian *and* British) are not always brought to justice, and evil deeds frequently go unpunished. Their supernatural tales overturn the 'tidy ordered world' that the British strove to uphold and call into question the Victorian notion of Britain as a well-intentioned, benevolent colonial power. In their ghost stories, the English are not without faults, and the Indian natives are recognized as villains and victims of both their own social customs as well as those introduced by the British.

East of Suez

In the opening lines of 'The Summoning of Arnold,' the narrator

⁵⁰ Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries*, p. 98.

says, 'One of the many lessons that the great Mother India instills into the hearts of her white foster children is to sympathise with one another's troubles and misfortunes however trivial or however serious.' These lines hold true for all of the stories in *East of Suez*, stories which showcase Alice Perrin's first-hand experience in India. Throughout the collection, the descriptions of Anglo-Indian life, both 'trivial' and 'serious,' attest to her observations of the people and places around her.

Like the plots that would dominate her novels, Perrin presents many stories of Anglo-Indian romantic relationships throughout the collection, though many of these stories do not have conventional happy endings. This makes for memorably tragic events and characters throughout the collection. 'Beynon, of the Irrigation Department' includes one of Perrin's most tragic British officials. Beynon's realization of the emptiness of his own life results in his saving the marriage of the Massengers, but the title character dies sick and alone at the end of the story. The Indian landscape, which pervades these stories to an extent that it, too, should be considered a character, makes it difficult for many couples to stay together. Two characters, Helen Kenwith, from 'A Perverted Punishment' and Lilla Arnold, from 'The Summoning of Arnold,' are sent home to England to recover from serious illness, and both die before reaching India and reuniting with their husbands. At the beginning of each story, Perrin describes how integral these women are to the men's emotional well-being, thereby making an argument for the larger social impact British women had in India. Both men are severely depressed by the departure of their wives and seem to lose a piece of themselves, even a piece of Britain, when they are left alone. In 'A Perverted Punishment', Perrin examines the consequences of moral judgment and the oftentimes difficult road to forgiveness. Major Kenwith realizes his mistaken suspicion of his wife only after her death, which causes his calls of 'forgive, forgive' to go unanswered.

In 'The Summoning of Arnold', the title character takes his wife's sickness and subsequent removal to England particularly badly. In a passage that underscores Perrin's intimate understanding of the Anglo-Indian psyche, Arnold's friend, Williamson, decides that he needs to keep a close eye on the grieving husband, 'because it was the kind of night in India when, if a man is not happy, he probably begins to wander about the compound with a

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revolver to shoot pariah dogs that bark and keep him awake, and sometimes, instead of a dead dog, it is the man who is found shot, through the roof of his mouth.' This tendency toward the tragic and macabre makes the stories that do end happily even more suspenseful and surprising for readers, who, after reading a few Perrin stories, may well expect bad things to happen. In 'The Court of Conscience,' Perrin presents a thoroughly likeable Anglo-Indian couple, and readers want to see their relationship succeed. Suspense in the story comes when the wife realizes that her husband loves and forgives her, even after she confesses not loving him when they were first married.

This ability to present readers with a seemingly predictable story, and then introducing something completely unexpected, is just one aspect of Perrin's talent for writing short fiction. Her propensity for holding the reader in suspense is in large part connected to the narrative tightness of her short stories. No word or phrase is superfluous or wasted; every element is used to effect. Because of this, the reader learns to not take too lightly anything that is said in a Perrin story. For instance, Beynon's conversation with Kitty Messenger about the dangers of walking too close to the alligators in the river comes back to haunt the young bride by the end of the story. Likewise, the brief appearance of a rat in Mary Orchard's room in 'A Man's Theory' should not be ignored, and Nell Krey's nagging fear of 'animals', which is hinted at in the beginning of 'The Biscobra,' gains tragic significance by the end of story.

As with Perrin's other collections, many stories in *East of Suez* use supernatural elements to comment on the tenuous existence of the British in India, especially British women. 'The Summoning of Arnold' uses the Victorian interest in second sight for its narrative framework. The possibility of supernatural communication from the far reaches of empire captured the British imagination from the 1880s onward to the twentieth century. Throughout this period, there are many stories of colonists reaching out to their loved ones in Britain from beyond the grave. This built on the existing tradition within Great Britain of people receiving messages from loved ones at the time of that person's death.⁵¹ However, colonial

⁵¹ For more on second sight, see R.C. Finucane's *Appearances of the Dead: A Cultural History of Ghosts* (1984).

spirit communications, in particular, usually involved spirits that suffered violent deaths, a fact that betrays British anxieties over the potential dangers in unfamiliar foreign lands. After its founding in 1882, the Society for Psychical Research published many reports of 'crisis apparitions' who appeared to loved ones from the far reaches of empire.⁵² In 'The Summoning of Arnold', Perrin reverses the typical 'crisis apparition' by allowing a dead woman in England to communicate with her husband in India.

Perrin's ghost stories also reflect colonial concerns over the unpredictability of Indian servants and more intimate contact with the foreign. 'In the New Room' features an Anglo-Indian couple who rent a bungalow that, unknown to them, was the scene of a murder during the Indian Rebellion of 1857. The woman's ayah (house servant) tries to warn her about a vindictive butler, Eli Bux. After her own life is threatened by Bux, the narrator consents to hear the ayah's story and learns of the previous burglary and murder: 'she told me that the father of Eli Bux had been khansamah to a lady in that very bungalow when the Mutiny broke out, that her husband was shot while he was at office, and that the butler cut his mistress's throat in the drawing-room and ran off with all the jewellery and money he could find.' This past event, which is reenacted to present occupants of the bungalow, points to the persistence of colonial memory and the cultural trauma produced amongst the Anglo-Indians after the Mutiny.⁵³ The

⁵² Roger Luckhurst, 'Knowledge, Belief and the Supernatural,' in *The Victorian Supernatural*, eds. Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett, and Pamela Thurschwell (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 202, 204.

⁵³ For more on bungalows as memorials to Mutiny violence against the British, see Margaret MacMillan's *Women of the Raj* (1988). According to MacMillan, these dwellings often had inflammatory remarks painted on their walls, such as 'Revenge your slaughtered countrywomen! To ——— with the bloody Sepoys!' (p.102). Because of their violent pasts, these places were often thought to be haunted. Iris Portal, a member of a civil service family who lived in Meerut during the twentieth century, remarked that several bungalows had plaques commemorating the violent deaths of their former inhabitants. She also recalled:

There was one bungalow near by where they had to take their beds out into the garden, not only for the heat but because things happened, like doors blowing open when there was no wind. Dogs would never stay in the house, and it was emphatically haunted. They

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massacre of women and children at Cawnpore in June 1857 outraged the British, both at home and in India, and resulted in continuing anxiety regarding the British imperial presence in India. The story highlights colonial concerns over the safety of Anglo-Indian women amongst 'hostile' natives, and the idea that the perceived safe space of an Anglo-Indian bungalow can be compromised by vengeful servants such as the khansamah was equally troubling to Perrin's readers.

In 'Chunia, Ayah', Perrin presents an even more complicated vision of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Although Chunia enacts great violence out of pure malice towards her Anglo-Indian employers, Perrin manages to make her a somewhat sympathetic character. By the end of the story, Chunia is perpetually haunted, which leads to her pathetic mental breakdown. Perrin refuses to give her readers a clear-cut villain, as she hints that the story's memsahib, Mary Pollok, is also partly to blame for the tragedy that befalls her child because of her initial violence toward Chunia. This makes the story a social comment on the contemporary debates about the role of ayahs in Anglo-Indian life, and the dangers that could come from British mothers who either become too dependent on their Indian servants, or too violent in their handling of Indian natives.⁵⁴ In the course of the story, Mary is guilty of both extremes, and her child is the victim of these poor domestic decisions.

'Caulfield's Crime', the most frequently anthologized Perrin story, focuses on the repercussions of violence against Indian natives.⁵⁵ The story concerns an Englishman who has an intimate

all felt it and they all hated it, and that was one of the Mutiny bungalows with a plaque on it. (p.103)

⁵⁴ For more on this social tension, see Nupur Chaudhuri's "Memsahibs and their Servants in Nineteenth-century India" (*Women's History Review* 3.4 [1994]: 549-562). Chaudhuri cites many contemporary memsahibs' letters and diaries in order to show that physical violence was common in Anglo-Indian households.

⁵⁵ The periodical publication for 'Caulfield's Crime' in the 1892 *Belgravia Annual* and the 4 March 1893 issue of *Littel's Living Age* was substantially revised by Perrin before the story's appearance in *East of Suez*. In earlier versions, there is more background on the relationship between the narrator and Caulfield, and the latter's personality is described in more detail. In the opening paragraph of the periodical publications, the narrator describes Caulfield as 'the worst-tempered fellow I ever met'

knowledge of India but misdirects this cultural potential by abusing his power over Indian natives and ends up the victim of an Indian ghost who returns from the grave to seek revenge over a violent, needless death. In Perrin's story, the avid hunter and adventurer goes from hero to villain, as she creates the unlikable, brutish persona of Caulfield and does not hesitate to pass judgment on his character from the very beginning, suggesting that the act which makes up the major event in the story is indeed a 'crime' committed by a British officer who has few, if any, redeeming qualities. Unlike Fleete in Rudyard Kipling's 'The Mark of the Beast,' Caulfield suffers a far greater punishment after his encounter with the supernatural, and does not escape the consequences of his act of violence.

In addition to stories that employ supernatural elements, there are also a few truly unsettling horror stories that remain in the reader's mind after the collection is finished. 'A Man's Theory' starts out with a description of the unlikeable John Orchard, who is described by Perrin in lines that showcase her talent for dry, biting humor: 'He was a prig of the first water' and 'was exactly the kind of man who would propose before breakfast.' However, his habit of 'knowing best' is turned against him when his insistence on his wife's not doting on their infant son has tragic consequences. The last story, 'The Biscobra', is possibly the most unsettling story of all, not only in its subject matter, but in the way in which Perrin tells the story and in the concluding image with which she leaves her readers. The sudden appearance of the 'uncanny' biscobra is followed by the equally-sudden collapse of the already-fragile Nell Krey. The story ends with village locals

(*Living Age*, p. 598), and then goes on to say that he is 'vindictive' and 'passionately violent' (p. 598). Readers also learn that Caulfield has recently transferred to the cavalry regiment under mysterious circumstances. Regarding the two men's relationship, the narrator says that Caulfield was twenty years his senior, and that he considered him 'a great friend' who he visited frequently during his early days in the new regiment: 'He never asked me to come, or pressed me to stay, and yet, in some inexplicable manner, I felt that my visits were not unwelcome to him' (p. 599). These details make the 'crime' less of a surprise, but give a better explanation for the narrator's loyalty to Caulfield towards the end of the story.

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finding a dead body, a mangled biscobra, and a raving lunatic in a nearby graveyard.

The dangers of the exotic are explored in many of the stories in this collection. In 'The Fakirs' Island,' the young and naïve Mona Selwyn goes against the advice of her would-be suitor, the seasoned British army officer George Robertson, and travels with another young Englishman to see the mysterious rituals of the Indian holy men. Once on the island, and away from the relative safety of her Anglo-Indian cantonment, Mona is cursed by an old Indian priest who condemns her to look like the poor native lepers she has just shunned. His prophecy comes true, and Mona is both physically and emotionally scarred by her time among the fakirs.

The influence of native superstition on both Indian and British lives runs throughout the collection. 'The White Tiger' relates the lore of a man-eating tiger that, in the opening lines, is described with near-supernatural qualities:

He was called the White Tiger by the villagers of the district because his yellow skin was pale with age, and his stripes so faded and far apart as to be almost invisible.

Having grown too large and heavy for cattle killing with any ease, he had lately become a man-eater, and terrible were the stories told by those who had seen him, and escaped the fatal blow of his huge paw. He was described as being the size of a bull-buffalo, with a belly that reached the ground, and a white moon between his ears, true token of the man-eater, as every native knows. He was said to have the power of assuming different shapes, and to lure his prey by the imitation of a human voice...

In the story, Kowta uses the dead body of his half-brother in order to lure the infamous white tiger, but his plan backfires, making the story what Saros Cowasjee describes as an effective allegory of Britain's imperial hold on India.⁵⁶ Other stories showcase well-meaning Indian natives who eagerly use their folk knowledge for the benefit of the British. In 'The Tiger-Charms', Mahomed Bux gives a young Anglo-Indian woman a charm that has been passed

⁵⁶ 'Introduction', *The Oxford Anthology of Raj Stories* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 12.

down in his family for generations in appreciation of her kindness to him. Likewise, in 'The Belief of Bhagwan, Bearer', the title character rushes to complete a native ritual in order to stop the restless spirit of an unburned syce before the ghost causes the death of a British woman. Although the British characters seemingly benefit from the intervention of Indian natives in the above two stories, the loyalty of the old bearer, Beni, to the Krey family in 'The Biscobra' and his belief in the transmigration of souls has tragic consequences for Frank Krey.

Through the figure of the unsettled ghost, who, in turn unsettles and troubles the living, Perrin provides some of the best social critiques of British colonialism in India. In her supernatural stories, she subtly criticized imperial policies that could not have been questioned openly without public censure. Her stories subversively draw attention to problems caused by the British in India, and unlike many of her contemporaries, who focused on more traditional romances that often did exploit the stereotypes of Indian natives, Perrin holds British men and women accountable for their roles as colonizers. She used the form of the short story to provide the reader with narrative shocks that could not be sustained in a lengthy novel, and short fiction allowed her to explore complicated racial and gender dynamics in a concise literary form. Perrin's uncanny stories disrupt the traditional Indian romance and advance a more daring form of social critique. And, as we might not expect of literature from the high tide of empire, the British are not always blameless for the troubles which befall them.

In the introduction to *The Oxford Anthology of Raj Stories* (1998), Saros Cowasjee says,

The neglect of Alice Perrin is hard to understand. She writes precisely and with great charm and sophistication. Many of her stories are laced with apt Indian proverbs and are a reservoir of Indian superstitions, folklore and customs. A brilliant satirist, she portrays the English and the Indians with a fine eye for the comic and the eccentric. Without revealing any of her own biases, she brings the two races into contact and allows them to settle their differences.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Cowasjee, 'Introduction', *The Oxford Anthology of Raj Stories*, p. 11.

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It is my hope that this edition of *East of Suez* will help to continue the critical reappraisal of Alice Perrin's fiction, present it to a new generation of readers and critics, and help to reestablish her as a major voice of Anglo-Indian literature.



Alice Perrin from the *Illustrated London News*, February 1909

A Brief Chronology of Alice Perrin's Works

- 1892** 'Caulfield's Crime' published in the *Belgravia Annual* – December.
- 1893** 'Caulfield's Crime' published in *Littel's Living Age* – March.
'In the Next Room' published in the *Belgravia Holiday Number*.
- 1894** 'The Biscobra' published in the Christmas Number of *London Society*
Into Temptation published in London in two volumes by White.
- 1896** 'Beynon, of the Irrigation Department' published in *The Windsor Magazine* – November.
Late in Life published in London in two volumes by Hurst & Blackett.
- 1897** 'A Perverted Punishment' published in *The Windsor Magazine* – July.
- 1898** 'An Eastern Echo' published in *The Illustrated London News* – June.
- 1899** 'The King Chair' published in the *Illustrated London News* – July.
Later published as 'The Sistrum' in *Red Records* (1906).
- 1901** *East of Suez* published in London by Anthony Treherne.
- 1902** *The Spell of the Jungle* published in London by Anthony Treherne.
- 1903** *The Stronger Claim* published in London by Eveleigh Nash.
- 1904** 'The Packet of Letters' published in *The Pall Mall Magazine* – July.
Later collected in *Red Records* (1906).
- 1905** *The Waters of Destruction* published in London by Chatto & Windus.

CHRONOLOGY OF ALICE PERRIN'S WORKS

- 1906** *Red Records* published in London by Chatto & Windus.
- 1907** *A Free Solitude* published in London by Chatto & Windus.
- 1909** 'The Tiger Charm' published in *Young's Magazine* and *McClure's Magazine* – November.
- Idolatry* published in New York by Duffield.
- 1910** 'A Perverted Punishment' published in *McClure's Magazine* – February.
- The Stronger Claim* and *The Spell of the Jungle* published in New York by Duffield.
- The Charm* published by in New York by Fitzgerald.
- 1912** *The Anglo-Indians* published in London by Methuen.
- 1913** *The Anglo-Indians* published in New York by Duffield.
- 1914** *The Woman in the Bazaar* published in London by Cassell and *The Happy Hunting Ground* published in London by Methuen.
- 1917** *Separation* published in London by Cassell and *Tales That Are Told* published in London by Skeffington.
- 1919** *Star of India* published in London by Cassell.
- 1920** *The Vow of Silence* published in London by Cassell.
- 1922** *The Mound* published in London by Methuen.
- 1925** *Government House* published in London by Cassell.
- 1926** *Rough Passages* published in London by Cassell.
- 1932** *Other Sheep* published in London by Benn.

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A Note on the Text

This text is based on the first edition of *East of Suez*, published by Anthony Treherne (London) in 1901. Occasional typographical errors have been silently corrected.

List of Illustrations

Alice Perrin, *The Illustrated London News*, February 1909, page 29.

Cover of the first edition of *East of Suez*, published by Anthony Treherne, London, 1901, page 35.

'Beynon, of the Irrigation Department,' illustrations by Harold Copping, *The Windsor Magazine*, November 1896, pages 37, 44, 49, 55, and 60.

'A Perverted Punishment,' illustrations by Harold Copping, *The Windsor Magazine*, July 1897, pages 79, 80, and 83.

'An Eastern Echo,' illustrations by R. Caton Woodville, *The Illustrated London News*, June 1898, page 92.

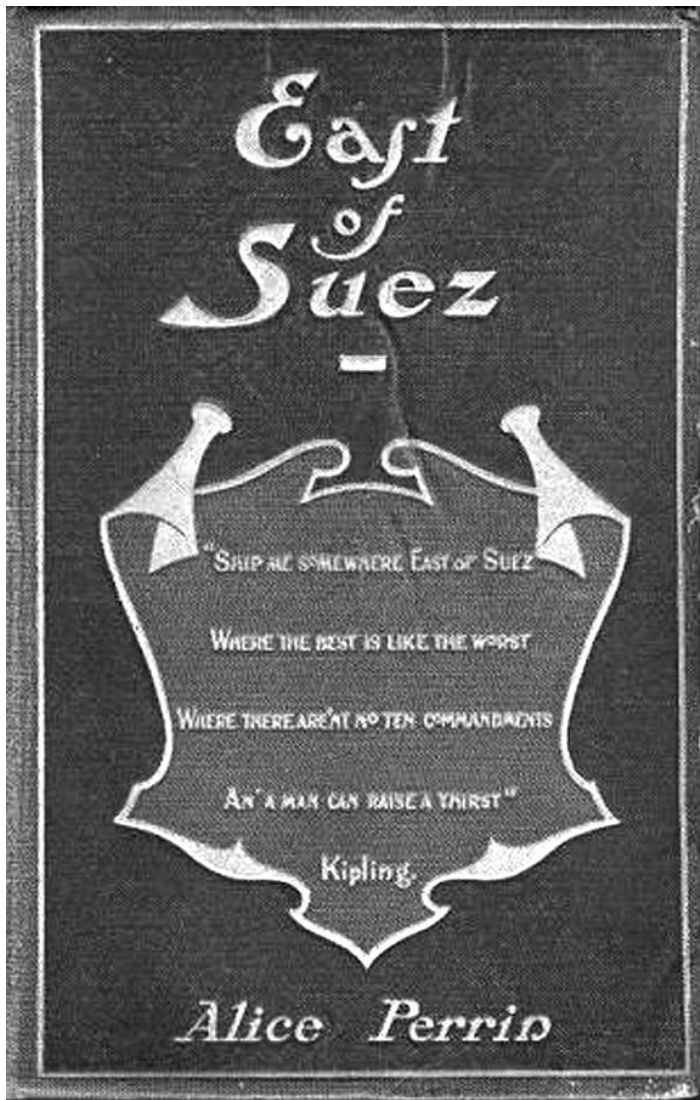
About the Editor

Melissa Makala specializes in nineteenth and early twentieth-century British literature and teaches at the University of South Carolina. She has just completed a book on women's writing and the supernatural, titled *Avenging Angels: The Female Ghost Story in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, and is currently working on a larger project involving the Anglo-Indian ghost stories of Bithia Mary Croker and Alice Perrin. Her essays have appeared in *English Studies*, *English Language Notes*, *Persuasions*, *The North Carolina Literary Review*, *Notes and Queries*, and *The CEA Critic*. She has essays forthcoming on the haunted house stories of Charlotte Riddell and Margaret Oliphant in *Gothic Studies* and on the Anglo-Indian ghost stories of Bithia Mary Croker and Alice Perrin in the collection *White Women and British India*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

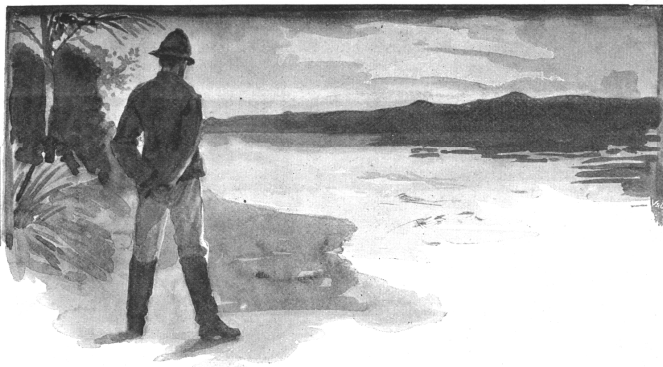
Acknowledgements

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Cover of 1901 edition of *East of Suez*, including Kipling's quote:

"Ship me somewhere east of Suez
Where there aren't no ten commandments
An' a man can raise a thirst."



BEYNON, OF THE IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT

BY ALICE PERRIN.
(Author of "Late in Life.")

Illustrated by HAROLD COPPING.

BEYNON, OF THE IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT

BEYNON walked down to the edge of the weir and looked out across the Ganges River. The evening air was soft and warm, and heavy with the scent of babool-blossom, for the hot weather was creeping on apace, and already the mangoes had begun to take shape upon the trees, and the 'brain fever' bird's¹ discordant song had risen to its most aggravating pitch. The sun was sinking with angry reluctance behind the low range of rocky hills that shone

¹ The brain-fever bird got its name from the sound the bird makes. It is actually the common hawk-cuckoo (*Cuculus varius*) which is common to South Asia. In *The Birds of Calcutta* (1904), Frank Finn notes, "Such have been known to confound the Koel with the brain-fever bird, which, however, is a quite distinct species, much more like the home cuckoo, and known in books as the Hawk-cuckoo (*Hierococcyx varius*) form his remarkable resemblance in plumage and general form and flight to the common Indian Sparrowhawk or Shikra (*Astur badius*). His note, however, fully entitles him to his ordinary designation, whether from its "damnable iteration" or from its remarkable resemblance to the word "brain-fever" repeated in a piercing voice running up the scale; although an equally worthy rendering of the performance, which has the merit of including the overture preceding the triple note, is, "O lor! O lor! how very hot it's getting—I feel it, I feel it," &c, &c., &c. The brain-fever bird in youth is nurtured by the "seven sisters," and in connection with his resemblance to the shikra it may be noted that one observer states that the whole sisterhood make themselves scarce when *Hierococcyx* appears on the scene, and thus give her a fair field for planting her oval imposition on them. On the other hand, as has been stated in the chapter dealing with those birds, the shabby seven have been known to show a bold front to the real enemy, and moreover the young brain-fever bird is as similar to a young hawk as its parent is to an old one; so that general rather than special deception may be the object of this remarkable resemblance, which occurs to a certain extent in many parasitic cuckoos, including the familiar bird at home (*Cuculus canorus*). This also occurs here, and may be heard any spring day at Darjeeling, together with a larger mountaineering relative of the brain-fever bird (*Hierococcyx sparveriioides*). India, indeed, rejoices in a number of cuckoos, both of the sort "as doesn't lay 'is own eggs 'isself," and of the more honest section who behave in domestic matters like any ordinary bird." (95-96)

purple in the distance, and the smooth, gliding waters reflected the broad bars of crimson and yellow with which the sky was streaked. Here and there the monotony of the river was broken by islets of sand, points of sticks and weeds, the floating carcass of some decaying animal, and the hackled backs of the alligators resting as though dead on the long strips of mud. Flights of birds were swaying and soaring homewards, and clouds of saffron-coloured dust long the river-banks told of the cattle being driven back to the villages after their day's grazing in the jungle.

Beynon looked at it all and saw nothing, principally because he was thinking of his work—he very seldom thought of anything else—and also because he was so accustomed to the scene; he had walked down to the weir and looked out across the river almost every evening for the past two years. After a few minutes he turned, inspected a tree-spur on his right, made a note of some repairs that seemed necessary, threw a stone at the snub nose of an alligator that appeared for a second above the water, and proceeded to stroll slowly home.

Home consisted of a small, thatched bungalow built on a piece of rising ground overlooking the river, with a little native village behind it, a cluster of workshops and engine-houses on one side, and on the other a row of deserted, tumble-down houses that spoke mournfully of the time when the weir was being built and they had been full of busy men; when the air had resounded with the hum of machinery, rumble of trucks, beating of hammers, and the turmoil of a mighty construction that had made eminent engineers of some men, invalidated others, and killed more than one or two from exposure and overwork. Now the only sounds that broke the stillness were the barking of the pariah dogs² and murmur of native voices from the little village, the rush of the water over the weir, and the cries of the birds that lived securely in the deserted compounds and revelled in a jungle of old gardens. Patakri was a very lonely spot, but it suited Beynon exactly. Being a civil engineer in the Irrigation Department, he had necessarily led a very lonely life, especially as he never remonstrated, and the

² Pariah dogs are medium-sized feral dogs with reddish-yellow coats. Common in India, the dogs received their name from a Tamil word *paraiyan*, denoting an outcast figure, as well as referring to the lowest Indian caste.

authorities were only too willing to conclude in consequence that he liked it. Here was a man who never complained, who never sent up urgent applications for a transfer or made a fuss when he got one, who abstained from pestering them with furious letters and medical certificates when his leave was refused, and who worked as well in the jungle as amid civilisation—possibly a great deal better for aught that had been proved to the contrary.

Therefore Beynon spent the first ten years of his service in passing from one lonely, unpopular sub-division to another, until the solitude grew on him, and the shyness and reserve of his nature developed into a morbid shrinking from companionship, and a dislike, almost amounting to horror, of meeting his fellow-creatures. He even dreaded the inspections by his superior officers with which the long weeks were sometimes varied, particularly when there happened to be ladies of the party—a situation that filled him with nervous trepidation, and made him shy and quiet to absolute stupidity. So when his turn came for the charge of a division, his relief at finding that he was posted to Patakri, where he knew his solitude would remain undisturbed, far outstripped his appreciation of the official compliment paid to his capabilities, for it was an exceedingly important charge connected with river training and irrigation head-works. He soon grew to love the place, apart from his official interest in it, which was great. He was only inspected once or twice a year, when he went with a precious boat-load of senior officers up the river and down again from point to point, was commended for his conscientious work, and left thanking his stars when they had gone. He had very little camping, and quite as much work as he wanted, and consequently he was as happy as it was possible for him to be in his own negative fashion.

However, during the past few weeks a somewhat disturbing element had entered into his daily routine. Beynon had made a friend—or, rather, somebody had made friends with him. This was a young planter who had lately come to manage an indigo factory on the other side of the river, and hating the lonely life he was forced to lead, had discovered Beynon with joy. He soon began to come over at his own invitation, whenever the mood seized him, and at first Beynon had somewhat resented these intrusions, but now he looked forward to and rather enjoyed the informal visits, all the more so as he found he was not expected to talk much himself. By this time he was acquainted with almost every detail of

Jack Messenger's personal history; how he was the youngest of the many sons of an impoverished Irish baronet; how he had somehow failed to pass 'every beastly exam' he had gone up for; how through the timely interest of a relative a billet had been secured for him on probation in the Indian police, from which he was subsequently evicted owing again to the exam difficulty. ('Such rot,' he asserted, 'expecting a fellow to pass exams. in such an idiotic language as Hindustani!') How six months' opium weighments had nearly been the death of him owing to the awful heat and the vile smell; how a year on a tea plantation had been worse than purgatory owing to the brute he was obliged to live with and the 'bounders' with whom he had to associate; and how finally a berth in indigo had been found for him, which proved slightly more congenial than the foregoing occupations, for there were fewer bounders of whom to fall foul, the work was fairly light and the shooting good. So Messenger had stuck to indigo for the space of three years, and until lately, when he had been transferred to his present factory, had always been within reach of his fellow-creatures;—consequently, he now took his inevitable loneliness in a rebellious spirit, and Beynon, being his only get-at-able neighbor, received the full benefit of his fits of discontent.

On this particular evening, when Beynon returned from his customary stroll, he found Jack Messenger established in the verandah with a whisky and soda, and apparently in his most pessimistic mood.

'I hadn't intended coming over to-day,' he said gloomily; 'but, by Jove, I couldn't stand another evening alone. I haven't spoken a word of English for three days. It's enough to make a fellow take to drink or matrimony, upon my soul it is. How can you stand it, Beynon?' he concluded, with a sudden irritation against the latter.

'I like it,' said Beynon, simply; 'but, of course, you're different—you're not accustomed to being alone.'

'Why haven't you ever married?' inquired Jack, abruptly.

'I? Good heavens! what on earth should I do with a wife? It would be wicked to bring a girl out into a jungle like this, especially with such a dull devil as myself for a husband. Besides, I haven't the least desire to marry.'

'Well, that's reason enough, I should think, without anything else,' answered Jack, and then the two men sat silent for a few minutes.

'Do you remember,' began Jack again, presently, with a certain amount of hesitation, 'my telling you about that girl I met last year whose father turned out to be an old pal of my governor's?'

Beynon nodded his head. He had heard a good deal about 'that girl' on and off. Jack rose from his seat and began to walk up and down.

'Look here, Beynon, I think I'll take leave and go and marry that girl.'

'But,' inquired Beynon, in amazement, 'how do you know that she would marry you?'

Jack laughed. 'Oh,' he said, in a confident tone, 'that part's all right. The only thing is—' he stopped, and did not conclude his sentence.

'But you couldn't ask a girl to come and live at Bakrar factory—even with you' (with unconscious sarcasm).

'My good ass,' said Jack, indulgently, 'that's just exactly what I shouldn't do. If I marry Kitty Vawse I've seen the last of Bakrar and all the bally indigo in India. Old Vawse is a Member of Council, with a vast amount of interest and more money than he knows what to do with. She's his only child, and he's never thwarted her in anything yet. Therefore, should she be determined to marry an indigo planter, he wouldn't let her go into the jungle, and his son-in-law would be accommodated with a billet worth taking.'

Beynon felt vaguely uncomfortable. He was sure there was something wrong somewhere. Of course he knew very little about such things, but it seemed to him that Jack ought not to look upon the matter in that light, or, at anyrate, if he did, that he ought not to talk about it. He felt anxious to express his disapproval of the scheme in becoming language, but his usual reticence and inability to put his feelings into words handicapped him fatally when anything approaching to explanation was necessary.

'Are you in love with her?' he asked shyly.

Jack glanced at him with secret amusement.

'Of course,' he answered, 'She's the prettiest girl in India.'

Beynon sat silent.

'Well, I don't know,' he said presently.

'Well, I do,' said Jack, with impatience, 'and I want a fresh peg, this one's flat.'

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"But how do you know that she would marry you?"

Another month dragged slowly by. The scorching west winds howled over the shrinking river and whirled up clouds of hot, copper-coloured dust from the widening banks, while the sun blazed pitilessly for twelve hours out of the twenty four. Massenger, rendered desperate, went off on leave; a native was deputed to do his work, and, until the rains were well on, Beynon saw nobody but his servants and the natives who worked under him. Then one day he read the announcement in the paper of Jack Massenger's marriage to Miss Vawse up at Simla, and a week later there arrived a letter from Jack himself, apologising for not having written the news sooner, and making every excuse but the real one, which was that he had totally forgotten Beynon's existence for the time being. He also informed Beynon that his father-in-law had got him a berth in the Court of Wards, not liking the notion of his daughter living in the jungle; that they were coming down to collect and pack his things at Bakrar, and would Beynon, like a good fellow, put them up for a day or two while they were getting it done? If so, he was to telegraph 'yes' at once.

Of course Beynon telegraphed 'yes,' and then looked about him in despair. He wandered through the house trying to instil a little life and cheerfulness into the position of the furniture. He had a notion that ladies objected to a table in the middle of the room, so he pushed the ugly round object on one side and scattered the latest scientific papers over it. He turned out of his own bedroom

because it was larger than the one he must otherwise give his guests, and the next morning he ransacked the deserted compounds and his own garden for flowers, which his bearer tied into tight little bundles and placed in peg tumblers. These were then arranged symmetrically on the mantelpiece, together with some faded, old-fashioned photographs of Beynon's home and people, the one long since broken up, and the other dispersed, married, or dead, he hardly knew which, as they had not written to him, nor he to them, for many years.

Still, in spite of all his efforts, the bare, whitewashed walls looked hopelessly cheerless, and the stiff wooden chairs wretchedly meager and untidy. What on earth would a lady think of it all? and the very worst kind of lady too—a young bride—of all others calculated to make a shy man feel nervous and ill at ease. He would have been thankful had the earth opened and swallowed him up on that dreaded morning, when he heard the terriers clamorously greeting the returning dogcart that he had sent to meet the bride and bridegroom.

Massenger was beaming. He rushed at Beynon with a shout, and turned with his hand stretched out towards his wife, watching his friend's face with an expectant smile on his own.

'Here's my missus,' he said, and then Beynon found himself shaking hands with a bright-eyed girl who showed a row of glistening white teeth as she smiled up at him from under her hat.

'I'm so dreadfully dirty,' she said, looking at her clothes and her little patent-leather shoes covered with dust. 'We've been all night in the train, so it's not fair to take stock of me now. Let me go to my room and get clean, and then I'll come out and show myself.'

Poor Beynon was dumb with shyness. The girl's vivid beauty dazzled him, and her easy, confident manner frightened him. He could only lead the way through the sitting-room (which looked more awful than ever by contrast as she passed through it) and lift the curtain with a silent indication that her room lay beyond. Then Massenger went to change, and half an hour later they appeared together in the dining-room for breakfast, Mrs Massenger dressed in pure, soft white, her eyes sparkling through their long lashes, a delicate pink flush high up on her cheeks, and looking as fresh as though she had never been in a train in her life. Beynon could not quite understand the relations between the newly-married pair. They did not appear to be rapturously in love with each other.

Massenger was undoubtedly proud of his wife, but treated her with an amused criticism in his manner, and talked of her to Beynon in a way that was infinitely embarrassing to the latter, while the lady herself laughed carelessly and scarcely seemed to listen. On her side there seemed to be a rather ostentatious indifference mingled with a certain amount of admiration. She evidently appreciated Jack's beauty of feature, his strength of limb, and the sweetness of his temper.

'I've never seen Jack in a rage,' she said to her host after breakfast. 'I sometimes wonder what would make him really angry. I think I must try everything till I find out; it would be an excitement.'

Surely this was a joke, thought Beynon, and laughed appropriately.

He did no work at all that day, as Mrs Massenger would not allow it. She said somebody must talk to her, and as Jack was preparing to go down to the weir to try and catch a mahseer,³ delaying his visit to the factory till to-morrow, it was clearly Mr Beynon's duty to stay and amuse her.

'I'll have that long chair taken out into the verandah,' she said as Jack and his fishing-rod disappeared. 'There's a nice breeze this morning and it's not too hot, and you can bring that low thing and sit facing me. I hate talking to anyone sitting by my side, it makes my neck ache. Don't you know the feeling?'

'I scarcely know the feeling of talking to anybody, to begin with,' said Beynon, dragging the low chairs out into the broad, shady verandah and placing them as she wished.

'But that is all your own fault,' she replied. Then she threw herself into the long chair and crossed her small, slender feet, showing a certain amount of delicate open-work stocking and a pair of high-heeled, shiny little shoes. Beynon wondered how she managed to walk in them.

'Oh, my head's so uncomfortable,' she cried. 'I must have a cushion. Have you got one?'

Beynon owned guiltily that he was afraid he had not.

'Well, then, there's one I brought with me in my room—a pink thing with a frill. Go and fetch it. You'll probably find it on the floor.'

³ A large, freshwater fish.

The astonished man rose to do her bidding without a word. What could he say? It was impossible, in the face of her request, to call a servant to fetch the cushion, and yet he felt he ought not to go into her room. It upset all his established notions of delicacy and propriety; however, as she had commanded, he must obey, so he passed through the open door with rather a beating heart. There was a faint perfume in the air that stirred his senses. He remembered noticing the same scent when Mrs Messenger passed near him. He saw the pillow on the ground on the other side of the room, and felt glad it was so far off, but ashamed of his gladness. He could not help glancing round as he made for the spot; silver-backed brushes gleamed on the dressing-table, a dainty pink dressing-gown covered with lace hung over a chair close to him, and from beneath it peeped a tiny pair of velvet slippers to match. How white the little feet must look thrust into them! He made a determined rush for the cushion, and the next moment was placing it at the back of Mrs Messenger's head.

'That's very nice,' she said; 'now sit down and let us talk.'

She was so entirely at her ease, and spoke with such winning confidence, that Beynon began to feel a little less uncomfortable, and almost forgot himself and his shortcomings as he gazed respectfully at her pretty face and perfect figure.

'So you live here all by yourself,' she began. "Do you like it?"

'Yes, I suppose so,' he said.

'Do you mean always to go on living like this?' Aren't you perpetually wanting something different or better? I think it such a mistake to be contented,' she concluded decidedly.

'Why?' inquired Beynon, with a smile. He calculated that she could not be more than eighteen or nineteen, and she was talking with the conviction of a woman of fifty.

'What are you laughing at?' she asked quickly. 'You think I am a child, perhaps? I am nearly twenty, let me tell you; and a woman of twenty is equal in mind—if she has any at all—to a man of thirty. Think of yourself when you were nineteen. Am I a child?"

Beynon blushed as he remembered himself at that age—overgrown, knock-kneed, awkward, spotty and stupid. Certainly, so far as he was concerned, there was truth in what she said. All the same, he resented her tone. Why should he not be content if he liked?

'Why is it a mistake?' he asked again.

‘Because if you’re contented you very seldom get any further. A man ought always to want something better than he has got. How can you stay here and let them sit on you, and be content? Why don’t you grumble for a better station or a nicer appointment? Oh, I know all about you from Jack. This lonely life is all your own fault.’

‘There is nothing more contemptible than a discontented man or woman,’ he said doggedly.

‘Ah! There I agree. I did not say you ought to be discontented. Being discontented merely means that you haven’t the energy or brains to set about bettering what you don’t like. Perhaps I ought to have said every man should be ambitious instead of no man should be contented. There’s vast difference between being discontented and ambitious.’

She put her head back into the soft cushion and looked at him through her long, curling lashes.

‘You are cross?’ she asked softly.

‘No,’ said Beynon, humbly, straightway forgiving her, and then there was a little silence. A seven-sister bird⁴ fussed about amongst the creepers and scolded the squirrels that darted to and fro, and a shiny black crow hopped up the verandah steps and scrutinised

⁴ Frank Finn, in *Birds of Calcutta* (1904), says that these birds are “of that singularly disreputable species which is commonly known in India as the ‘Seven Sisters’ or ‘Seven Brothers,’ or by the Hindustani equivalent of *sat-bhai*. In books it gets called the Jungle Babbler, the first part of the name being inappropriate, for it is found everywhere, and the last singularly happy, for it does babble with a vengeance. As may be inferred from their popular names, these birds go about in small packs of about half-a-dozen—there are not invariably seven, nor can these be a family party, since only three or four eggs are laid. They hop about searching for food on the ground or branches, murmuring squeakily to themselves meanwhile, and ever and anon burst out into a startling volley of wheezy hysterical chatter, which gets terribly upon one’s nerves in time in a place where they are common. Linnaeus, when he called the bird *Turdus canorus*, the tuneful thrush, must have been wildly ignorant of it, or have hopelessly mixed it up with an ally and a real songster, the huamei of China (*Trochalopteron canorum*), which he included under the same name. Modern ornithologists call our babbling brotherhood *Crateropus canorus*, placing them in a different family from the true thrushes, to which they nevertheless bear a strong general resemblance in form and size” (15-16).

Mrs Messenger with one bright, suspicious eye.

‘Why have you never married?’ she inquired presently.

‘I’ve never been in love,’ he answered simply.

‘Never been in love? Just fancy! And’—with a little sigh—‘it’s so easy!’

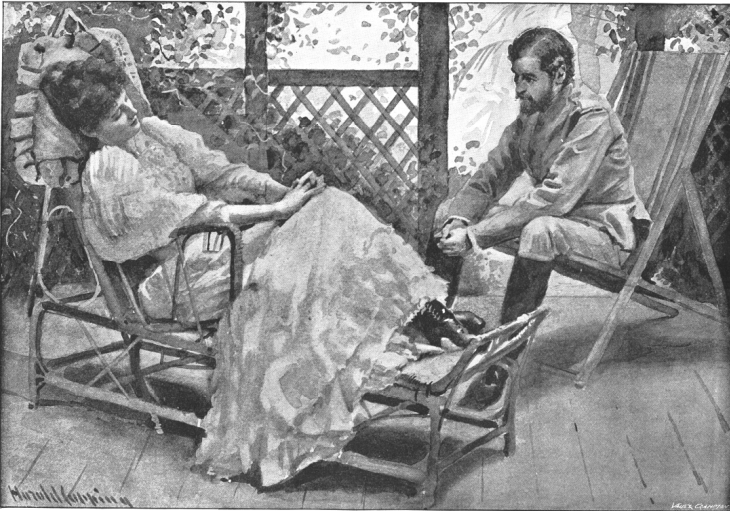
Beynon began to think it must be, under some circumstances.

‘But wouldn’t you like to be married?’

‘Yes,’ said Beynon, slowly, ‘I should.’

But, strange to say, he had never thought so before.

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"Never been in love? Just fancy! And ... it's so easy!"

It was with a heavy heart that Beynon realised that the last day of the Messengers' visit had come. The time had passed like a dream for him, and he had never known before what real happiness meant. Jack had spent the days either over at the factory winding up affairs or else fishing down by the weir, while Mrs Messenger and Beynon had sat in the broad verandah and talked, strolled through the tangled gardens and explored the tumble-down houses, or rowed about on the swirling river in the warm evening air. He felt a blissful amazement that she seemed to like his company and to seek it, and as they sauntered down to the water

the last evening he looked furtively at her with a tightening at his heart and throat,—the sensation produced on some people by the sound of sacred music or the shimmer of moonlight on the sea.

She had asked him to take her for a final row on the river, and he had willingly assented. Indeed, he had reached that stage when he would cheerfully have drowned himself had Mrs Messenger asked him to do so! They got leisurely into the boat, both of them sitting in the cushioned stern, while four strong natives dressed in dark blue and crimson uniforms pulled them swiftly down the river. The islets of sand and long strips of mud had disappeared with the advent of the rains, and the river was now a broad sheet of swollen water, flowing very rapidly, though so silently that it hardly seemed to move. Every now and then a big fish would jump at a fly with a mighty splash, and silence would follow again save for the regular stroke of the oars.

Presently there arose a faint sound of nasal singing from a small native village perched up on the river bank, and winding down the crooked path to the water's edge came a strange little procession. Ten or a dozen tall native priests swathed in salmon-pink cloth, and with shining shaven heads and faces, walked ahead chanting solemnly through their aquiline noses; then close behind came six more like them carrying a boat-shaped basket slung on bamboo poles, in which sat a dead body, also swathed in salmon-pink, and almost covered with garlands of the sacred jessamine blossom. The procession was completed by a crowd of mourners, who joined in the funeral hymn, and a mixed assemblage of individuals from the village, whose curiosity had impelled them forth. The little column stopped at the river's edge, and after a few minutes the basket was slowly and carefully launched, chanted prayers being kept up in a continual monotone, and the dead man, sitting upright in his basket, started alone on his last voyage, leaving a little trail of jessamine blossoms in his wake as the water swept him into the middle of the river.

Mrs Messenger looked inquiringly at Beynon.

'It's a Gussein's funeral,' he explained. 'They are a particularly holy sect of Hindu, and when they die are always put into the river like this instead of being burned. Look at him twirling round and round in the current. Ah, I thought so; there's an alligator at him. See, he's being pulled down.'

The basket with its burden was disappearing deeper into the

water with little jerky movements, and then, as they watched it, suddenly went under altogether, leaving a tangled mass of jessamine garlands to mark the spot.

‘Oh, how dreadful!’ said Mrs Messenger, with a shudder. ‘Fancy falling in and being seized by one of those horrid brutes! I suppose there would be no chance whatever of being saved?’

‘None,’ replied Beynon, looking over his shoulder at the salmon-coloured stream of figures wending its way back to the village. ‘They swarm in the river, especially close to the weir. I’ve seen hundreds of them there of an evening—mostly the fish-eating kind; but there were plenty of the snub-nosed fellows too; and one would be quite enough for anybody wishing to commit suicide.’

‘Oh, don’t!’

‘I didn’t mean to frighten you. I’m not going to jump in—though it wouldn’t make much difference to anyone if I did.’

‘That’s not true.’

‘Who would care?’

‘I should, for one. Listen to me, Mr Beynon. You have no business to talk like that, and I’m going to seize the opportunity to give you a lecture. You’re behaving very badly to yourself, and some day you’ll be sorry. You’ve allowed yourself to stagnate, instead of making the most of life—even with such an existence as you have chosen you might have done a good deal. Your work? Of course you must do your work—you can’t help that; but you can help never reading an amusing book, never going away whenever you can beg, borrow, or steal a day’s leave, never trying to make any friends, and letting yourself get so shy that you’re miserable if a stranger comes near you.’

‘What shall I do? What would you wish?’

‘Well, smarten yourself up a little to begin with. Just look at your hair—you might almost do it in a Grecian knot! And then—you won’t mind what I say will you?—you know your clothes. I’m certain you haven’t had any new ones since you first came out to India. Read some novels, and go away now and then and learn to enjoy yourself. You can begin with us when you’ve got some new clothes; but you couldn’t come and stay with me in the present state of your wardrobe!’

Beynon humbly assented. He wondered more and more how a woman like Mrs Messenger could take any interest in such a stupid chap as himself. He knew how rusty he was, and felt frightened at

the amount of labour he would have to expend in improving himself to her satisfaction. But it would be a labour of love, and if he could please her ever so little it would be something.

'I never knew anyone like you,' he said suddenly, with adoration in his voice. 'I don't believe your equal exists.'

'Well, anyway I'm glad you're not cross,' she answered, smiling. The sun had disappeared during the last few moments, and the air felt damp and misty. They had rowed some way down the river with the stream, taking no note of time or distance, and Beynon, realising this, said he thought they had better get out and walk. It would perhaps be safer for her than sitting in the boat now the sun had set.

'The path is very fairly good,' he said, 'and I'm so afraid of your catching cold. We can be home before it's quite dark.'

She agreed, and the boat was taken to a cleft in the bank where they could easily get out, and side by side they started off briskly along the uneven pathway. Beynon talked more during that walk than he had done for months previously. Mrs Massenger could always make people talk, for she possessed the rare faculty of being a sympathetic listener; but after a time they were silent, for darkness was rapidly closing in, making it more difficult for them to pick their way, and they had still nearly half a mile before them.

'How dark it's getting' said Mrs Massenger; 'perhaps I had better take your arm.'

He gave it to her with joyful readiness, and as they stumbled on he noticed the same subtle scent about her that had pervaded her room the day she had sent him to fetch her cushion, and it mounted to his brain and made it reel. Presently, her foot slipped, and she put out her other hand to save herself. In an instant his arm was round her, the blood rushed through his veins, he felt he must tighten his clasp, must kiss the sweet face that was pressed against his coat, must tell her that he loved her, and pour out the passion that was bursting from his lips.

Then he recovered himself, and shuddered to think how near he had been to losing her friendship. He gently helped her to recover her balance, asked if she was hurt, and walked on beside her with his teeth clenched and his heart thumping against his side. He was thoroughly miserable and ashamed; he felt like a traitor, and dreaded to meet her in the light lest she should see the self-condemnation in his eyes. Poor Beynon! He had taken the disease

very violently. Like measles, it is always worse the later we catch it, and his once monotonous, uneventful life had been suddenly turned into a chaos of keen misery and delirious happiness.

He felt he could have cried when he saw the Massengers off the next morning, but he was obliged to harden his heart and be thankful for the few days of bliss that had been his, and go back and put his shoulder to the wheel with more energy than ever. Luckily, he had a good deal to occupy his mind, for his office work had fallen sadly into arrears, but all the same he found time to remember Mrs Messenger's behests, for he wrote to Calcutta and also to England for clothes, ordered a supply of the newest light literature, and sent for a barber, whom he bribed with fabulous wages to remain as his servant. He had something to buoy him up in his loneliness too, something he was looking forward to ardently and intensely, which he dreamed of by night and thought of by day—ten days' leave to visit the Massengers.

'You may come directly the cold weather begins and you have got your new clothes,' she had called out from the train as they were starting. And he had smiled and nodded, and waved his hat, and lived from that moment on the prospect of seeing her again.

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At last, one cold weather's morning, some two months later, Beynon arrayed himself in a brand-new tweed suit and started off for the long-anticipated visit. For days he had been in a state of suppressed excitement, hardly able to eat or sleep, imagining his meeting with Mrs Messenger, the kind look of approval she would give him when he told her he had obeyed her to the letter; the long, confidential talks he would have alone with her; the ten whole days of unalloyed happiness that were in store for him. Perhaps she would be at the Gurple station to meet him; but no, there was no little dainty figure on the platform, and so, relieved as well as disappointed, he got into a *ghari*⁵ and drove to the Massengers' house. Jack came out into the porch to meet him, and welcomed him very heartily.

'Come and have a peg, old fellow. My wife's out. I don't

⁵ From the Hindi word *gārī*, meaning a horse-drawn cab.

suppose she'll be back before dinner-time. She's going to a dance to-night. Perhaps you'd like to go too, or would you rather stay and smoke with me?

'Aren't you going?'

'Oh, no, I never go to these things. They bore me to death. My wife likes them, though, and they keep her amused.'

Beynon's heart sank ever so little. He could not dance, and he would only be in the way if he went with her. But at anyrate he would not decide till he had seen her and discovered what her wishes were on the subject. He sat chatting with Jack until it was dark, and the lamps were brought in, and then came a rattle of wheels and the sound of voices and laughter outside. He followed Jack into the verandah. Under the porch stood a high dogcart, from which Mrs Messenger was preparing to climb, while ready to help her was a tall, broad-shouldered man with a clean-cut, soldierly face and an iron-grey moustache.

'Won't you come in?' she said when she had reached the ground.

'No, thanks, not this evening. How are you, Messenger? Coming to our dance to-night?'

'No, thanks, Colonel, my wife will go for me. Well, good-night, as you won't come in.'

The dogcart rattled away, and Mrs Messenger turned and greeted Beynon gaily, told him to make himself at home and ask for all he wanted, and then went off to dress. She was just as nice as ever to him, and yet he somehow felt a little damped and uncomfortable. He had a frightful presentiment that his old shyness was going to return, and that he would have to begin his friendship with her all over again. He caught his breath when she came in to dinner, she looked so lovely. It made him ask himself bitterly what was the use of this vain fluttering round the candle? He had much better have stayed and slaved away his days in the jungle, and so saved himself much bitter heartache.

She seemed to take it for granted that he was not going to the dance, and said good-night to him after dinner as she wrapped herself in her evening cloak, and added that he was not to let Jack bore him. Then she went off, and he did not see her again till luncheon-time the next day. At luncheon also appeared the Colonel with the iron-grey moustache, who looked inquiringly at Beynon through an eyeglass and made him feel profoundly uncom-

fortable. Mrs Messenger and the Colonel chatted incessantly of all that was going on in the station, and discussed people Beynon had never heard of, while he could only sit stupidly silent and feel convinced that the fellow kept her talking of these things on purpose to annoy him. He assured himself that she would have talked to him too, only the brute never gave her a chance, and she was obliged to answer him out of politeness. Yet was it politeness that made her go out driving with the Colonel directly after luncheon, and ask him in to dinner that night? Beynon became utterly wretched. He never for a moment blamed her; but he felt he was not wanted, and was more keenly alive than ever to his own inferiority and his presumption in dreaming for one moment that his presence would make any difference to her. All the same, he had expected that she would be glad to see him, had anticipated a few words of praise when he told her of the barber, his new library of books, and his renovated wardrobe, and now he had not even had a chance of speaking to her alone at all. She treated him as Jack's friend. As if he had come all that way with such throbbing pulses merely to see Jack!



"She said good-night to him as she wrapped herself in the evening cloak."

The Colonel was constantly at Mrs Messenger's side. He sat in her boudoir in the morning, drove or rode with her in the afternoon, and generally dined in the house in the evening. Jack did a little work, ate, smoked, slept, went to the club to play poker, and took little note of anything else.

As a matter of fact, Messenger never had gone out much with his wife; he hated garden-parties and dancing, and was only too thankful that she was willing to go without him. In justice to her it must be owned that she had implored him to go about with her, but he had only laughed good-humouredly and said,—

'Oh, no, Kitty, I couldn't—I should die of boredom. If you don't like going alone stay at home, or get somebody else to take you.'

'If I stay at home you only go off to the club and leave me by myself,' she had pouted.

'Well, if I went with you I should only be bored and bad-tempered,' he returned. 'Go off and enjoy yourself in your own way, old girl, and let me do the same.'

She had taken him at his word, and 'gone off and enjoyed herself' with a vengeance.

Before Beynon had been in the house three days he was making plans for his departure. He wished he had never come. He longed for Patakri, and yearned for the weir, the rush of the water, the still forms of the crocodiles, and the solitude that would be his in which to try and recover from his disappointment. On the fourth morning he found Mrs Messenger alone in the verandah for a moment.

'I think I had better go back,' he began moodily.

'Nonsense! What's the matter with you? Don't look so wretched, there's a dear fellow. You know how busy I am. I've been longing for a talk with you. Do you remember how we used to talk at Patakri?'

Beynon smiled grimly. Did he remember? Rather, should he ever forget?

'Listen,' she said, laying her finger-tips on his arm, 'I shall have an hour before dinner to-night. You shall come into my little room, and we'll have a good chat. You mustn't dream of going away. We shall have lots of other opportunities before your ten days are up.'

Beynon's spirits rose. What a fool he had been! Of course it

was only that she had had no time to take notice of him—she could not help her engagements—and he would stay his ten days, and be thankful if he only got a meager half-hour of her society.

That evening he went to the door of the little room she had made her boudoir, and was about to knock and ask if he might enter, when he noticed that the door was slightly open, and heard the sound of voices within. One voice was Mrs Messenger's, and she was crying. Beynon stood rooted to the spot. He had no intention of listening; his only idea was that she was in trouble, and that he was ready to help her if need be.

The other voice was the Colonel's, and the next moment Beynon had heard it utter words that made him turn and fly to his own room in an agony of hideous doubt and bewilderment. He felt sick with apprehension, furious with Jack, on whose apathy and carelessness he threw all the blame, and half mad with the sense of his powerlessness to prevent her taking a step that must ruin her whole life. He was helplessly ignorant of what course to pursue. He could not go to Mrs Messenger and reason with her; he could not carry tales to Jack of his wife. Definite action was impossible, but there was one thing he could and would do—tell Jack what he thought of him, and spare him not one jot, so that when the crash came he should feel that he was to blame and no other.

Beynon called his servant and ordered him to pack his clothes and take them to the station. He meant to say things to Jack that would make it impossible for him to stay a night longer in the house. Then, with a singing in his ears and bitter sorrow in his heart, he went to look for his host.

'Will you come out for a walk?' he said when he had found him. 'I want to talk to you.'

Something in his voice and the expression of his face roused Jack, who looked somewhat anxiously at Beynon.

'Go for a walk?' he repeated. 'But it's such an unusual hour to go out, unless you'd like to drive up to the club.'

'No. I only want you to come out with me; I have something to say.'

Jack fetched his hat with reluctance, and wonderingly followed Beynon out into the cold, dusky air, which was heavy with the smoke of hundreds of native fires in neighbouring compounds. Jack shuddered and wanted to go back, but Beynon laid a hot, trembling hand on his shoulder and pushed him into the road. A

solitary lamp had just been lighted and burned dimly in the smoky atmosphere; a dogcart flashed past them, and the occupants called out 'Good-night' cheerily to Jack; a shivering native, followed by a lean, jackal-like dog, glided silently by and disappeared into the gloom; and then the two men were alone by the side of the dusty, metallised road, with only the murmur and lights of the bazaar a hundred yards ahead of them.

'Poof! this beastly smoke is enough to choke one,' said Jack, in a disgusted voice. 'I hate this end of the station; so close to the bazaar, one never gets rid of the smell. What on earth possessed you to want to go out, Beynon? Come back and smoke by the fire.'

'I'm not going back,' said Beynon, hoarsely. 'I'm never going into your house again. I brought you out here to tell you what I think of you, and I couldn't do that in your own house. You're a selfish, lazy brute; you think of nothing but yourself and your own comfort. You married your wife for what you could get with her, and now you neglect her and leave her for other men to take about and look after, and do things for her that her husband is the proper person to do. As long as you have got all you want, what do you care what danger she is in, what people say about her, what she does! You don't know her value, and you won't until, by your own pig-headed laziness and selfishness, you have lost her—'

'Hold your tongue, sir!' cried Jack, in astonished rage. 'Who are you to come preaching to me as to how I treat my wife! I never heard of such impudence in my life. You're drunk or mad!'

'I'm not either,' said Beynon, slowly, a sudden hopelessness coming over him. He put his hands in his pockets doggedly. 'I'm going away. Perhaps I've made an ass of myself. Of course you think I'm a meddling fool, and you may for all I care. I may be right and I may be wrong, that is for you to find out. In any case, we can never be the same to one another again. I wasn't made to live with my fellow-creatures, and I sha'n't try the experiment any more. I have told my bearer to take my things to the station, and I am going to walk there now.'

'Come, come, old chap,' said Jack, still angry and bewildered, but his natural good-temper coming to the fore: 'what's the matter with you? Never mind what you said just now. Of course it was beastly cheek, and God only knows why you said it, but I'll forget all about it. You're seedy; you've been drinking too much tea out at Patakri, and you take things too seriously. Come in and don't talk

any more rot.'

But Beynon's mind was made up, and his resolve was not to be shaken. Jack forgot the cold, and the smell and the smoke, and waxed eloquent in his persuasions, but they were of no avail.

'But what am I to say to Kitty?' he asked helplessly.

'Tell her exactly what happened,' said Beynon, 'and every word I said. It's no good trying to persuade me, Messenger. I am not going back.'

So finally the two men shook hands and parted, one in about as miserable a frame of mind as a man could well be, and the other in considerable doubt of his late guest's sanity, yet depressed, puzzled, stirred by Beynon's onslaught, and apprehensive of he knew not what. As he reached the house the Colonel's dogcart was in the act of driving away, so he knew his wife would be alone, and he wondered moodily how he was to explain Beynon's sudden departure to her. He went straight to her boudoir. She was sitting staring into the fire, and Jack saw that she had been crying. Beynon's words rang in his ears with unpleasant distinctness, 'You married your wife for what you could get with her.' Was it true? Well, partly, perhaps. But now, as he looked at her little sunny head, with the rippling brown hair shining in the firelight, and the mournful droop of her slender neck, his indolent, good-natured apathy cleared away like mist from water, and the knowledge of how he had grown to love his wife, and what his life would be without her, struck full upon him. A horrible fear took hold of him. Was it too late? Had he lost her through what Beynon had called his own pig-headed selfishness? He went up to her, lifting her chin in his hand, looked into her tear-stained eyes.

'What is it, little woman?' he asked unsteadily.

Her eyes fell and her mouth quivered. 'You would not understand,' she answered.

Jack's hand fell heavily to his side. He moved over to the mantelpiece, and, with one foot on the fender-stool, gazed silently into the fire. Mrs Messenger sat still. She was battling with her desire to break into stormy tears, and Jack looked up and saw the struggle.

'Do you hate me, Kitty?' he said impulsively.

'Do I hate you?' she repeated in wonder.

'I couldn't blame you if you did,' he went on. 'Something happened to-night; someone told me the truth about myself, and I see

what a selfish beast I have been. I know, too, what you are to me, and how I love you, and now perhaps you don't care for me, and it is all too late.' Poor, unhappy Jack put his arms on the mantelpiece and laid his handsome head on them to conceal the smarting in his eyeballs that he had not felt since he was a little boy leaving his mother to go to school.

There was a slight pause, and then Mrs Messenger was standing on the fender-stool to make herself as tall as Jack, her arms were round his neck and her cheek pressed tightly to his.

'Oh, Jack, Jack, I love you so awfully, and I thought you didn't care!' Then it gradually came out how dearly she had always loved him, how bitter had been the discovery that his love for her was as nothing compared with hers for him. How she had tried flirting with the Colonel just to see if Jack would be jealous, but without effect; how that very evening the man had tried to persuade her to run away with him, and how, when Jack came in, she had been crying because she thought he wouldn't care a bit if she did run away.

'Hush!' said Jack, stopping her mouth with a kiss.



"She was sitting staring into the fire."

When Mrs Messenger heard of Jack's extraordinary interview with Beynon in the road, and the latter's sudden departure, she blamed herself bitterly. She felt sure she knew the reason of his flight, for had she not told him to come to her room that evening, and then forgotten all about it? And at that very moment the Colonel had been with her. Poor, dear fellow! Of course he had overheard something, and then he had 'gone for' Jack, and blamed him instead of herself, with the result that he had given her the one great happiness she had longed for—Jack's love.

'Why did you let him go?' she exclaimed. 'We can't get him back, because he must have caught the train by this time easily. You will have to take a week's leave, Jack, and we will go and have a second honeymoon with him out at Patakri. I will telegraph to him that we are coming, and then he will have plenty of time to clear out of his own room and make himself as uncomfortable as he likes for us. Oh, I am so sorry I wasn't nicer to him; and I never told him how becoming his new clothes were, or how well he had his hair cut, or how improved he was, or anything!' and she wrung her little hands.

'Don't worry yourself,' said Jack. 'I'll get the leave, and then you can tell him what you like to your heart's content.'

The next morning Mrs Messenger wired to Patakri, and after some hours a reply came to her telegram, but it was not from Beynon. It was from the native assistant-engineer, and it said, 'Beynon ill with fever.' This hastened the Messenger's departure, for they felt they must be with the sick man in his loneliness without delay.

Early the next morning they arrived at the little roadside station, which, being a tiny place of a primitive order, boasted of no ticca gharis. Jack wanted to send a man to Patakri to fetch Beynon's dogcart, but Mrs Messenger insisted that they could not afford to lose the time, and they finally drove the six miles in an ekka.⁶ Mrs Messenger's head ached, and her feet went to sleep, but she did not complain, and said little, except to urge the driver to make his scraggy little pony go faster.

Everything was very still when they reached the house. She thought of the first time she had entered it; Beynon's embarr-

⁶ Rough native vehicle [Perrin's note].

assment, the clamour of the dogs, the dust on her smart new shoes, and a dozen other trifles. In the verandah stood the native assistant, a portly gentleman in a tight cloth coat, a many-coloured worsted comforter round his neck, oily black hair, and large patent-leather shoes.

‘Good morning, sir,’ he began in halting English. ‘I have very much regret to inform your honour that Mr Beynon, Esq., executive engineer, is no longer in the land of the living. I have already wired to superintending engineer to make report, and to Mr Smith in next division.’

Jack turned to his wife in silent dismay. Her face was deathly white.

‘Where is he?’ she whispered, stepping forward to enter the house.

‘Madam, he is not there,’ said the baboo,⁷ with officious importance. ‘Mr Beynon, Esq., I am very said to report, lost his sanity with the effect of the fever; I absent. In this state he, rising from his bed last night, walked down to weir, where Bewani, watchman, was witness that he made false step and was fallen into water. Being full moon, this same Bewani was enabled to witness foregoing sad event. He used all endeavour to save Mr Beynon, Esq., but being a poor man, was unable to take plunge into water from dread of the—er—the—er—the saurians, which would without doubt have caused his death also, therefore—’

‘Hold your tongue, you ass!’ shouted Jack, angrily, and was just in time to catch his wife’s figure as she fell back senseless.

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It was all only too true, for the baboo’s story was corroborated by the servants and the frightened watchman, whose mind was assailed by a terrible fear that he might be held accountable for the sahib’s death. Beynon had returned to Patakri with fever on him, and all the next day had lain tossing and raving in delirium. The bearer said he had not considered it serious, for the sahib often had illnesses like this; they were only common fever, and seldom lasted long. The native doctor had come to see him and given him medicine, and he had seemed better by the evening, so the bearer

⁷ Clerk [Perrin’s note].

had allowed himself to go to sleep. He had awoke in the middle of the night to find his master delirious again and walking about the room. 'He would not be persuaded to go back to bed,' continued the weeping bearer, 'but he put on his new clothes that had come from England, and insisted on going out. I could not stay him, sahib; he was too strong, and I am growing old and feeble. I could only follow him to see that he came to no harm. He said he was going to the railway station, but he turned his steps towards the water, and ran swiftly down the slope. Before I could overtake him he had reached the weir and cast himself into the water. Bewani, watchman, says his foot slipped, but the sahib was light-headed and he sought the water to cool the burning of his skin. His body will not be found. Mother Gunga seldom gives back what she takes.'

The old bearer was right. Beynon's body was not recovered, and Mrs Messenger had to go back without having told him how greatly she thought he had improved himself, or how much better he looked with his hair cut properly.

Her life must ever be tinged with the bitterness of remorse, and the remembrance of a man's patient, honest eyes looking in vain to her for a word of approbation. And there is one corner in her heart from which, even in her happiest hours, there will still creep haunting visions of a little thatched bungalow overlooking the River Ganges, the deep, swirling water reflecting the sunset glow, a Gussein's funeral, and the cruel, hungry alligators waiting so quietly for their prey.



THE TIGER-CHARM

THE sun, the sky, the burning, dusty atmosphere, and the waving sea of tall yellow grass seemed molten into one blinding blaze of pitiless heat to the aching vision of little Mrs Wingate. In spite of blue goggles, pith sun-hat and enormous umbrella, she felt as though she were being slowly roasted alive, for the month was May, and she and her husband were perched on the back of an elephant, traversing a large tract of jungle at the foot of the Himalayas.

Colonel Wingate was one of the keenest sportsmen in India, and every day for the past week had he and his wife, and their friend, Captain Bastable, sallied forth from the camp with a line of elephants to beat through the forests of grass that reached to the animals' ears; to squelch over swamps, disturbing herds of antelope and wild pig; to pierce thick tangles of jungle, from which rose pea-fowl, black partridge, and birds of gorgeous plumage; to cross stony beds of dry rivers—ever on the watch for the tigers that had hitherto baffled all their efforts.

As each 'likely' spot was drawn a blank, Netta Wingate heaved a sigh of relief, for she hated sport, was afraid of the elephants, and lived in hourly terror of seeing a tiger. She longed for the fortnight in camp to be over, and secretly hoped that the latter week of it might prove as unsuccessful as the first. Her skin was burnt to the hue of a berry, her head ached perpetually from the heat and glare, the motion of the elephant made her feel sick, and if she ventured to speak, her husband only impatiently bade her be quiet.

This afternoon, as they ploughed and rocked over the hard, uneven ground, she could scarcely keep awake, dazzled as she was by the vista of scorched yellow country and the gleam of her husband's rifle barrels in the melting sunshine. She swayed drowsily from side to side in the howdah,⁸ her head drooped, her eyelids closed. . . .

She was roused by a torrent of angry exclamations. Her

⁸ From the Hindi word *baudah*, meaning a seat used for riding on the back of an elephant.

umbrella had hitched itself obstinately into the collar of Colonel Wingate's coat, and he was making infuriated efforts to free himself. Jim Bastable, approaching on his elephant, caught a mixed vision of the refractory umbrella and two agitated sun-hats, the red face and fierce blue eyes of the Colonel, and the anxious, apologetic, sleepy countenance of Mrs Wingate, as she hurriedly strove to release her irate lord and master. The whole party came to an involuntary halt, the natives listening with interest as the sahib stormed at the memsahib and the umbrella in the same breath.

'That howdah is not big enough for two people,' shouted Captain Bastable, coming to the rescue. 'Let Mrs Wingate change to mine. It's bigger, and my elephant has easier paces.'

Hot, irritated, angry, Colonel Wingate commanded his wife to betake herself to Bastable's elephant, and to keep her infernal umbrella closed for the rest of the day, adding that women had no business out tiger-shooting; and why the devil had she come at all?—oblivious of the fact that Mrs Wingate had begged to be allowed to stay in the station, and that he himself had insisted on her coming.

She well knew that argument or contradiction would only make matters worse, for he had swallowed three stiff whiskies and sodas at luncheon in the broiling sun, and since the severe sunstroke that had so nearly killed him two years ago, the smallest quantity of spirits was enough to change him from an exceedingly bad-tempered man into something little short of a maniac. She had heedlessly married him when she was barely nineteen, turning a deaf ear to warnings of his violence, and now, at twenty-three, her existence was one long fear. He never allowed her out of his sight, he never believed a word she said; he watched her, suspected her, bullied her unmercifully, and was insanely jealous. Unfortunately, she was one of those nervous, timid women, who often rather provoke ill-treatment than otherwise.

This afternoon she marvelled at being permitted to change to Captain Bastable's howdah, and with a feeling of relief scrambled off the elephant, though trembling, as she always did, lest the great beast should seize her with his trunk or lash her with his tail, that was like a jointed iron rod. Then, once safely perched up behind Captain Bastable, she settled herself with a delightful sense of security. He understood her nervousness, he did not laugh or grumble at her little involuntary cries of fear; he was not impatient

when she was convinced the elephant was running away or sinking in a quicksand, or that the howdah was slipping off. He also understood the Colonel, and had several times helped her through a trying situation; and now the sympathy in his kind eyes made her tender heart throb with gratitude.

‘All right?’ he asked.

She nodded, smiling, and they started again ploughing and lurching through the coarse grass, great wisps of which the elephant uprooted with his trunk, and beat against his chest to get rid of the soil before putting them in his mouth. Half an hour later, as they drew near the edge of the forest, one of the elephants suddenly stopped short, with a jerky, backward movement, and trumpeted shrilly. There was an expectant halt all along the line, and a cry from a native of ‘Tiger! Tiger!’ Then an enormous striped beast bounded out of the grass and stood for a moment in a small, open space, lashing its tail and snarling defiance. Colonel Wingate fired. The tiger, badly wounded, charged, and sprang at the head of Captain Bastable’s elephant. There was a confusion of noise; savage roars from the tiger; shrieks from the excited elephants; shouts from the natives; banging of rifles. Mrs Wingate covered her face with her hands. She heard a thud, as of a heavy body falling to the ground, and then she found herself being flung from side to side of the howdah, as the elephant bolted madly towards the forest, one huge ear torn to ribbons by the tiger’s claws.

She heard Captain Bastable telling her to hold on tight, and shouting desperate warnings to the mahout⁹ to keep the elephant as clear of the forest as possible. Like many nervous people in the face of real danger, she suddenly became absolutely calm, and uttered no sound as the pace increased and they tore along the forest edge, escaping overhanging boughs by a miracle. To her it seemed that the ponderous flight lasted for hours. She was bruised, shaken, giddy, and the crash that came at last was a relief rather than otherwise. A huge branch combed the howdah off the elephant’s back, sweeping the mahout with it, while the still terrified animal sped on trumpeting and crashing through the forest.

Mrs Wingate was thrown clear of the howdah. Captain Bastable

⁹ Meaning an elephant handler, the word *mahout* is derived from the Hindi words *mahaut* and *mahavat*.

had saved himself by jumping, and only the old mahout lay doubled up and unconscious amongst the débris of shattered wood, torn leather and broken ropes. Netta could hardly believe she was not hurt, and she and Captain Bastable stared at one another with dazed faces for some moments before they could collect their senses. Far away in the distance they could hear the elephant still running. Between them they extricated the mahout, and, seating herself on the ground, Netta took the old man's unconscious head on to her lap, while Captain Bastable anxiously examined the wizened, shrunken body.

'Is he dead?' she asked.

'I can't be sure. I'm afraid he is. I wonder if I could find some water. I haven't an idea where we are, for I lost all count of time and distance. I hope Wingate is following us. Should you be afraid to stay here while I have a look round and see if we are anywhere near a village?'

'Oh, no, I sha'n't be frightened,' she said steadily. Her delicate, clear-cut face looked up at him fearlessly from the tangled background of mighty trees and dense creepers; and her companion could scarcely believe she was the same trembling, nervous little coward of an hour ago.

He left her, and the stillness of the jungle was very oppressive when the sound of his footsteps died away. She was alone with a dead, or dying man, on the threshold of the vast, mysterious forest, with its possible horrors of wild elephants, tigers, leopards, snakes! She tried to turn her thoughts from such things, but the scream of a peacock made her start as it rent the silence, and then the undergrowth began to rustle ominously. It was only a porcupine that came out, rattling his quills, and, on seeing her, ran into further shelter out of sight. It seemed to be growing darker, and she fancied the evening must be drawing in. She wondered if her husband would overtake them. If not, how were she and Jim Bastable to get back to the camp? Then she heard voices and footsteps, and presently a little party of natives came in sight, led by Jim and bearing a string bedstead.

'I found a village not far off,' he explained, 'and thought we'd better take the poor old chap there. Then, if the Colonel doesn't turn up by the time we've seen him comfortably settled, we must find our way back to the camp as best we can.'

The natives chattered and exclaimed as they lifted the

unconscious body on to the bedstead, and then the little procession started. Netta was so bruised and stiff she could hardly walk; but, with the help of Bastable's arm, she hobbled along till the village was gained. The headman conducted them to his house, which consisted of a mud hovel shared by himself and his family with several relations, besides a cow and a goat with two kids. He gave Netta a wicker stool to sit on and some smoky buffalo's milk to drink, while the village physician was summoned, who at last succeeded in restoring the mahout to consciousness and pouring a potion down his throat.

'I die,' whispered the patient, feebly.

Netta went to his side, and he recognised her.

'A—ree! mem-sahib!' he quavered. 'So Allah has guarded thee. But the anger of the Colonel sahib will be great against me for permitting the elephant to run away, and it is better that I die. Where is that daughter of a pig? She was a rascal from her youth up; but to-day was the first time she ever really disobeyed my voice.'

He tried to raise himself, but fell back groaning, for his injuries were internal and past hope.

'It is growing dark.' He put forth his trembling hand blindly. 'Where is the little white lady who so feared the sahib, and the elephants, and the jungle? Do not be afraid, mem-sahib. Those who fear should never go into the jungle. So if thou seest a tiger, be bold, be bold; call him "uncle" and show him the tiger-charm. Then will he turn away and harm thee not—' He wandered on incoherently, his fingers fumbling with something at his throat, and presently he drew out a small silver amulet attached to a piece of cord. As he held it towards Netta, it flashed in the light of the miserable native oil lamp that someone had just brought in and placed on the floor.

'Take it, mem-sahib, and feel no fear while thou hast it, for no tiger would touch thee. It was my father's, and his father's before him, and there is that written on it which has ever protected us from the tiger's tooth. I myself shall need it no longer, for I am going, whereat my nephew will rejoice; for he has long coveted my seat. Thou shalt have the charm, mem-sahib, for thou hast stayed by an old man, and not left him to die alone in a Hindu village and a strange place. Some day, in the hour of danger, thy little fingers may touch the charm, and then thou wilt recall old Mahomed Bux,

mahout, with gratitude.'

He groped for Netta's hand, and pushed the amulet into her palm. She took it, and laid her cool fingers on the old man's burning forehead.

'Salaam, Mahomed Bux,' she said softly. 'Bahut, bahut, salaam.' Which is the nearest Hindustani equivalent for 'Thank you.'

But he did not hear her. He was wandering again, and for half an hour he babbled of elephants, of tigers, of camps and jungles, until his voice became faint and died away in hoarse gasps.

Then he sighed heavily and lay still, and Jim Bastable took Mrs Wingate out into the air, and told her that the old mahout was dead. She gave way and sobbed, for she was aching all over and tired to death, and she dreaded the return to the camp.

'Oh! my dear girl, please don't cry!' said Jim, distressfully. 'Though really I can't wonder at it, after all you've gone through to-day; and you've been so awfully plucky, too.'

Netta gulped down her tears. It was delicious to be praised for courage, when she was only accustomed to abuse for cowardice.

'How are we to get back to the camp?' she asked dolefully. 'It's so late.'

And, indeed, darkness had come swiftly on, and the light of the village fires was all that enabled them to see each other.

'The moon will be up presently; we must wait for that. They say the village near our camp lies about six miles off, and that there is a cart-track of sorts towards it. I told them they must let us have a bullock-cart, and we shall have to make the best of that.'

They sat down side by side on a couple of large stones, and listened in silence to the lowing of the tethered cattle, the ceaseless, irritating cry of the brain fever bird, and the subdued conversation of a group of children and village idlers, who had assembled at a respectful distance to watch them with inquisitive interest. Once a shrill trumpeting in the distance told of a herd of wild elephants out for a night's raid on the crops, and at intervals packs of jackals swept howling across the fields, while the moon rose gradually over the collection of squalid huts and flooded the vast country with a light that made the forest black and fearful.

Then a clumsy little cart, drawn by two small, frightened white bullocks, rattled into view. Jim and Netta climbed into the vehicle, and were politely escorted off the premises by the headman and the concourse of interested villagers and excited women and

children.

They bumped and shook over the rough, uneven track. The bullocks raced or crawled alternately, while the driver twisted their tails and abused them hoarsely. The moonlight grew brighter and more glorious. The air, now soft and cool, was filled with strong scents and the hum of insects released from the heat of the day.

At last they caught the gleam of white tents against the dark background of a mango-grove.

‘The camp,’ said Captain Bastable, shortly.

Netta made a nervous exclamation.

‘Do you think there will be a row?’ he asked with some hesitation. They had never discussed Mrs Wingate’s domestic troubles together.

‘Perhaps he is still looking out for us,’ she said evasively.

‘If he had followed us at all, he must have found us. I believe he went on shooting, or back to the camp.’ There was an angry impatience in his voice. ‘Don’t be nervous,’ he added hastily. ‘Try not to mind anything he may say. Don’t listen. He can’t always help it, you know. I wish you could persuade him to retire; the sun out here makes him half off his head.’

‘I wish I could,’ she sighed. ‘But he will never do anything I ask him, and the big game shooting keeps him in India.’

Jim nodded, and there was a comprehending silence between them till they reached the edge of the camp, got out of the cart, and made their way to the principal tent. There they discovered Colonel Wingate, still in his shooting clothes, sitting by the table, on which stood an almost empty bottle of whisky. He rose as they entered, and delivered himself of a torrent of bad language. He accused the pair of going off together on purpose, declaring he would divorce his wife and kill Bastable. He stormed, raved and threatened, giving them no opportunity of speaking, until at last Jim broke in and insisted on being heard.

‘For Heaven’s sake, be quiet,’ he said firmly, ‘or you’ll have a fit. You saw the elephant run away, and apparently you made no effort to follow us and come to our help. We were swept off by a tree, and the mahout was mortally hurt. It was a perfect miracle that neither your wife nor I was killed. The mahout died in a village, and we had to get here in a bullock-cart.’ Then, seeing Wingate preparing for another onslaught, Bastable took him by the shoulders. ‘My dear chap, you’re not yourself. Go to bed, and we’ll

talk it over tomorrow if you still wish to.'

Colonel Wingate laughed harshly. His mood had changed suddenly.

'Go to bed?' he shouted boisterously. 'Why, I was just going out when you arrived. There was a kill last night, only a mile off, and I'm going to get the tiger.' He stared wildly at Jim, who saw that he was not responsible for his words and actions. The brain, already touched by sunstroke, had given way at last under the power of whisky. Jim's first impulse was to prevent his carrying out his intention of going after the tiger. Then he reflected that it was not safe for Netta to be alone with the man, and that, if Wingate were allowed his own way, it would at least take him out of the camp.

'Very well,' said Jim, quietly, 'and I will come with you.'

'Do,' answered the Colonel pleasantly, and then, as Bastable turned for a moment, Mrs Wingate saw her husband make a diabolical grimace at the other's unconscious back. Her heart beat rapidly with fear. Did he mean to murder Jim? She felt convinced he contemplated mischief; but the question was how to warn Captain Bastable without her husband's knowledge. The opportunity came more easily than she had expected, for presently the Colonel went outside to call for his rifle and give some orders. She flew to Bastable's side.

'Be careful,' she panted; 'he wants to kill you, I know he does. He's mad! Oh, don't go with him—don't go—'

'It will be all right,' he said reassuringly. 'I'll look out for myself, but I can't let him go alone in this state. We shall only sit up in a tree an hour or two, for the tiger must have come and gone long ago. Don't be frightened. Go to bed and rest.'

She drew from her pocket the little polished amulet the mahout had given her.

'At anyrate take this,' she said hysterically. 'It may save you from a tiger, if it doesn't from my husband. I know I am silly, but do take it. There may be luck in it, you can never tell; and old Mahomed Bux said it had saved him and his father and his grandfather—and that you ought to call a tiger "uncle"—' she broke off, half laughing, half crying, utterly unstrung.

To please her he put the little charm into his pocket, and after a hasty drink went out and joined Wingate, who insisted that they should proceed on foot and by themselves. Bastable knew it would

be useless to make any opposition, and they started, their rifles in their hands; but, when they had gone some distance and the tainted air told them they were nearing their destination, Jim discovered he had no cartridges.

'Never mind,' whispered the Colonel. 'I have plenty, and our rifles have the same bore. We can't go back now; we've no time to lose.'

Jim submitted, and he and Wingate tip-toed to the foot of a tree, the low branches and thick leaves of which afforded an excellent hiding place, down-wind from the half-eaten carcass of the cow. They climbed carefully up, making scarcely any noise, and then Jim held out his hand to the other for some cartridges. The Colonel nodded.

'Presently,' he whispered, and Jim waited, thinking it extremely unlikely that cartridges would be wanted at all.

The moonlight came feebly through the foliage of the surrounding trees on to the little glade before them, in which lay the remains of the carcass pulled under a bush to shield it from the carrion birds. A deer pattered by towards the river, casting startled glances on every side; insects beat against the faces of the two men; and a jackal ran out with his brush hanging down, looked round, and retired again, with a melancholy howl. Then there arose a commotion in the branches of the neighboring trees, and a troop of monkeys fought and crashed and chattered, as they leapt from bough to bough. Jim knew that this often portended the approach of a tiger, and the moment afterwards a long, hoarse call from the river told him that the warning was correct. He made a silent sign for the cartridges; but Wingate took no notice: his face was hard and set, and the white of his eyes gleamed.

A few seconds later a large tiger crept slowly out of the grass, his stomach on the ground, his huge head held low. Jim remembered the native superstition that the head of a man-eating tiger is weighed down by the souls of its victims. With a run and a spring the creature attacked its meal, and began growling and munching contentedly, purring like a cat, and stopping every now and then to tear up the earth with its claws.

A report rang out. Wingate had fired at and hit the tiger. The great beast gave a terrific roar and sprang at the tree. Jim lifted his rifle, only to remember that it was unloaded.

'Shoot again!' he cried excitedly, as the tiger fell back and

prepared for another spring. To his horror, Wingate deliberately fired the second barrel into the air, and, throwing away the rifle, grasped him by the arms. The man's teeth were bared, his face distorted and hideous, his purpose unmistakable—he was trying to throw Bastable to the tiger. Wingate was strong with the diabolical strength of madness, and they swayed till the branches of the tree crackled ominously. Again the tiger roared and sprang, and again fell back, only to gather itself together for another effort. The two men rocked and panted, the branches cracked louder with a dry, splitting sound, then broke off altogether, and, locked in each other's arms, they fell heavily to the ground.

Jim Bastable went undermost, and was half stunned by the shock. He heard a snarl in his ear, followed by a dreadful cry. He felt the weight of Wingate's body lifted from him with a jerk, and he scrambled blindly to his feet. As in a nightmare, he saw the tiger bounding away, carrying something that hung limply from the great jaws, just as a cat carries a dead mouse.

He seized the Colonel's rifle that lay near him; but he knew it was empty, and that the cartridges were in the Colonel's pocket. He ran after the tiger, shouting, yelling, brandishing the rifle, in hopes of frightening the brute into dropping its prey; but, after one swift glance back, it bounded into the thick jungle with the speed of a deer, and Bastable was left standing alone.

Faint and sick, he began running madly towards the camp for help, though he knew well that nothing in this world could ever help Wingate again. His forehead was bleeding profusely, either hurt in the fall or touched by the tiger's claw, and the blood trickling into his eyes nearly blinded him. He pulled his handkerchief from his pocket as he ran, and something came with it that glittered in the moonlight and fell to the ground with a metallic ring.

It was the little silver amulet. The tiger-charm.



A PERVERTED PUNISHMENT

THREE o'clock on an April afternoon, and the mail train from Bombay steamed into the station of one of the largest cities of Northern India.

The platform instantly became covered with a struggling, yellow mass of natives: fat, half-naked merchants; consequential Bengali clerks, with shiny yellow skins and lank black locks; swaggering sepoys on leave, with jaunty caps and fiercely-curled beards; keen, hawk-faced Afghans wrapped in garments suggestive of the Scriptures; whole parties of excited villagers, bound for some pilgrim shrine, clinging to each other and shouting discordantly; refreshment sellers screaming their wares, and coolies, bearing luggage on their heads, vociferating as wildly as though their very lives depended on penetrating the crowd.

Into this bewildering, deafening babel stepped Major Kenwithin from a first-class compartment. His rugged face, tanned and seared by twenty years of Indian service, wore anything but an amiable expression, and he barely responded to the cordial greeting of a young Englishman who was threading his way through a bevy of noisy, chattering, native females towards the parcels office.

'Missis went off all right?' shouted Cartwright over the crowd of draped heads.

Kenwithin only nodded, and turned his attention to his luggage and orderly.

'Poor old chap—how he feels it!' muttered the other as he proceeded to claim the parcel he had come to the station to fetch, while Kenwithin drove to his bungalow in the native cavalry lines feeling utterly and completely wretched.

The square, thatched house wore a dreary, deserted appearance. The plants in the verandah drooped, and the clambering bougainvillea and gold-mohur blossoms hung from the walls in long, neglected trails, waiting in vain for 'the memsahib's' careful supervision. The interior of the building shared the general dejection inevitable to an Anglo-Indian establishment from which a woman's presence has been suddenly withdrawn and the Major's lonely heart ached as he roamed through the rooms, missing his wife

more and more at every step. How on earth was he to get through six long, weary months without her? How had he ever lived without her at all?

And yet, until the day he met his wife, John Kenwithin had managed to lead an existence entirely after his own heart. His regiment first, and then shooting of every description had been all he lived for. With women he had had little to do, for he hated society and entertained no very exalted opinion of the opposite sex. He knew that the ladies of his own family had been good, loving wives and mothers, with duty as the keynote of their lives, and he wished all women were like them; but as, from what he had observed, this did not appear to be the case, he avoided the feminine world as much as possible.

However, the time came when his astonished friends learnt that he was engaged to be married, and subsequently discovered that he had made a very admirable selection. Certainly no one could have suited his tenacious, truth-loving, somewhat harsh temperament better than the wife he had chosen, for she was a self-denying, conscientious soul, past her first girlhood, with a simple, sterling directness of character, and a calm, restful beauty of her own in her steadfast grey eyes and regular features. She adored the Major with her whole being; she considered nothing but his comfort and convenience; she bored people to death by making him her sole topic of conversation, and, in short, she surpassed even the memory of his mother and aunts in her capacity for doing her duty and worshipping her husband. The pair had led an ideally happy married life for the space of two years, and then had come Mrs Kenwithin's sudden failure of health, and the doctor's urgent advice that she should proceed 'home' without delay to consult a heart specialist. So the Major had been forced to let her go alone, with no prospect of following her, for leave was stopped that season because of trouble on the frontier.

All that day he wandered aimlessly about the house, unable to work or to pull himself together. He felt he had no heart to go to mess that night and answer kindly-meant inquiries as to his wife's departure, so he wrote to Cartwright (who was his first cousin and senior subaltern in the regiment) and asked him to come and dine in the bungalow. Cartwright readily assented. He was fond of Kenwithin and understood him thoroughly; he knew of the goodness as well as the narrow sternness that lay in his cousin's nature;

knew that he was straight and honest as the day, but also—as is frequently the case—the most suspicious and intolerant of sin and weakness in others.

The two men ate their dinner more or less in silence. Cartwright made little attempt to talk, for he felt that well-intentioned conversation would be more likely to irritate than soothe; but afterwards, as they sat outside in front of the bungalow smoking their cheroots, he racked his brains for some subtle method of distracting his cousin's thoughts. One plan he was fairly certain would succeed, but he hesitated to adopt it. Cartwright had never confided his own trouble to anyone, and only his anxiety to rouse Kenwithin from his moody reflections made him contemplate the mention of it now.

He took the cheroot from his lips and cleared his throat nervously. The sudden sound rang out on the warm, clear stillness of the Indian night, and subdued rustlings of startled birds and squirrels shook the creepers and undergrowth. He glanced around for a moment; the thatched roof of the bungalow loomed up dark against the sky that was already glimmering with the rising moon, and tall plantain trees, edging the garden, waved and bowed, disturbed by the puff of warm wind that crept round the walls of the bungalow wafting scents of mango and jessamine blossom in its train.

'I say, John,' began Cartwright, shamefacedly, feeling glad that the moon had not yet looked over the thatched roof, 'I'm beastly sorry for you, old man. I know what it is to part from a woman you'd sell your soul for.'

Kenwithin turned quickly towards him.

'You? Why, I thought—you never said—?'

Cartwright smiled without amusement.

'No, because the less said about it the better. I suppose, with your notions, you'd call it a disgraceful affair, but I'm hanged if I can see it in that light.'

'A married woman?'

Cartwright nodded, and his memory turned to the face he loved, keeping him silent. Kenwithin's eyes hardened and his mouth grew set, and as the moon rose slowly over the round of the thatched roof, the silver light showed up his large, rugged features clear against the dense background of the verandah, and touched his grizzled hair to whiteness.

'She knows you care for her?' he asked.

Cartwright nodded again, and covered his eyes with his hand, for in the brightness of the moonlight, recollections seemed to start from every shadow.

'And is her husband a brute to her?'

'No. That is the worst of it.'

Kenwithin laughed comprehensively.

'Look here, my dear boy, drop it! The whole thing is wrong and foolish, and nothing but harm can come of it. Either a woman is good or she is bad, and there's no intermediate stage. No decent married woman would listen to a word of love from a man not her husband. I know the class. Without being actually depraved, they are false to the heart's core—they can't exist without illicit admiration!'

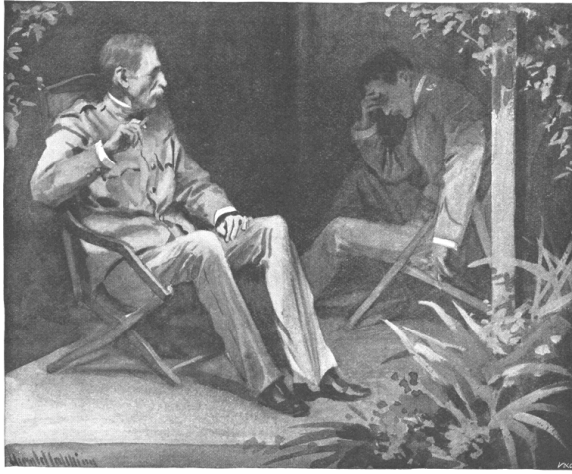
A dark look of rage swept over Cartwright's face, but with an effort he controlled the outburst of fierce defence that rose to his lips—for had he not brought this on himself by opening the subject to a man of Kenwithin's ideas? He carefully selected another cheroot, and spoke in the intervals of lighting it.

'Forgive—(puff)—my saying so—(puff)—Kenwithin, but I think you're a bit narrow-minded. The woman I shall love till the day of my death is hardly of that class. No doubt I was wrong, and she weak; but there was no real harm in it; and now she has gone home. The only thing is that occasionally, to-night for instance, the future seems somewhat unfaceable.'

'Granted that there was no real harm, and that I am narrow-minded, the thing is still unsound throughout, and you know it! Perhaps I am behind the times, but my idea of woman as she should be is that duty comes first with her. I would no more have married one who let me make love to her during her husband's lifetime than I would have married—a native.'

'You were never tried,' remarked Cartwright, shortly, and changed the subject, for his effort to stir Kenwithin from his depression had been successful, and the two men sat on in the moonlight chatting casually of everyday matters until they parted for the night.

A PERVERTED PUNISHMENT



"And is her husband a brute to her?"

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Helen Kenwith in gazed dreamily out over the dazzling glint of the Red Sea from the deck of an outward-bound P. and O. steamer. The six long, weary months of separation were nearly over, and she was returning to her beloved 'John' somewhat better in health, but with serious injunctions from the foremost heart specialist in London to avoid fatigue and excitement for the future. The deck was absolutely quiet, save for the monotonous vibration of the screw and an occasional flap of the awning in the burning, fitful wind. Helen's white eyelids were slowly drooping when she was roused by the voice of a Mrs Trench (her cabin companion), who, fresh from a nap below, was settling herself by Mrs Kenwith in's side, relentlessly prepared for conversation.

She was an attractive little person of barely five-and-twenty, with sparkling brown eyes and crisp, ruddy hair. She and Mrs Kenwith in had struck up a certain reserved friendship which neither permitted full play, seeing that it was not likely to be renewed; for, though Mrs Trench had spent a few years in India, her husband's regiment had lately been moved to Aden, where she was now rejoining him after a summer in England.

'Here are the photographs I wanted to show you,' she began, opening a packet in her lap. 'They were in that box in the hold after all. The first officer was angelic; he got it up for me, although

it wasn't a baggage day.' This with a significant air, which Helen ignored. She, like her husband, had no sympathy with flirtation.

She put out her hand for the photographs (which consisted chiefly of a collection of good-looking subalterns in uniform), glancing casually at each, until one arrested her attention.

'Oh, that's Cecil Cartwright—my husband's cousin. He's in our regiment. Fancy your knowing him! Isn't he nice?'

Mrs Trench put the portrait back with a hasty, nervous movement. 'I used to meet him at Simla,' she said shortly.

'Yes, he spent all his leave there the last two or three years. John used to be furious because he wouldn't join shooting expeditions to Thibet or the Terai instead. I believe he means to take furlough next month if he can get it. A nasty time of year to arrive in England. Don't you hate the winter?'



"He's in our regiment. Fancy your knowing him! Isn't he nice?"

The reply and discussion that followed took them away from the subject of Cecil Cartwright, and Helen thought no more of the incident until the night before they reached Aden, when she was destined to learn why it was that her husband's cousin had spent so much of his leave at Simla.

According to her custom, Helen had gone early to bed, leaving on deck Mrs Trench, who generally came down long after her

cabin companion was asleep. To-night, however, she appeared a full hour before her usual time, and Helen, being still awake, saw with concern that the pretty face was white and quivering, and the large eyes shining with tears.

‘Is anything the matter?’ she asked involuntarily.

‘Oh, did I wake you?’ I’m sorry. I came down because the moonlight on the water made me so miserable—anything beautiful makes me wretched now,’ and sitting down on the edge of her berth, she began to cry hysterically, at the same time undressing with feverish haste.

This was so unlike the usually light-hearted little lady that Helen was alarmed, and went to her side.

‘Tell me,’ she urged sympathetically.

‘Mrs Kenwith in,’ said the other, suddenly, after a pause, ‘do you love your husband very much?’

‘He is everything on earth to me!’

‘Would you have loved him just the same if he had been a married man when you first met him? Supposing you knew that it was wrong to love him, would that stop you?’

‘Oh, don’t!’ cried Helen, chokingly. ‘What do you mean? Don’t you care for your husband? Isn’t he good to you?’

‘He is more than good to me. But he is twenty-five years older than I am, and I married him before I knew anything at all about love. And now, just as you feel about your John, I feel about a man who is not my husband. Oh, sometimes I wish I had never seen him. I dread meeting my husband to-morrow. I am always so frightened’—lowering her voice—‘so frightened of his guessing—’

Mrs Kenwith in’s pity drowned her principles.

‘Tell me about it—perhaps I can help you,’ she said, and the kindness and forbearance in her voice drew forth the ugly, commonplace little story of the love (innocent though it was of active wrong) that existed between Daisy Trench and Cecil Cartwright.

‘How horrified you look!’ was the defiant conclusion. ‘I suppose it sounds awful to you; but there was no real harm; and I am the better for loving him—it has done me good.’

‘Good Heavens!’ burst out Helen, passionately, ‘are you the better for acting a lie every second of your life to a husband who believes in you and loves you? Is it doing you good to feel in perpetual terror of being found out? You may say you could not

help loving Cecil, but you could help fostering the love, and being mean, false, deceitful!

'Oh,' whimpered Mrs Trench, looking like a child who has accidentally broken something valuable, 'I didn't mean to be so wicked.'

Then Helen curbed her righteous anger and patiently strove to convince Mrs Trench of the error of her ways. She pleaded with her, coaxed her, and frightened her by turns until the night was well on.

'Yes, I know, I know,' she sobbed at last in abject penitence. 'I must give him up—I must never see him again. Oh, why couldn't God have made me happy and good like you? I am so miserable! And how am I to prevent his stopping at Aden on his way home?'

'Write to him, write now, at once, and meet your husband to-morrow with a clear conscience.'

'But I've packed up all my writing things. And I'm such a coward. I should be afraid of the letter going astray and coming back, and then my husband would see it. Such things have happened. A friend of mine told me once—'

'Let me tell Cecil,' interrupted Mrs Kenwithin; 'he will not have started when I get back.'

The little woman hesitated, and for a moment Helen feared that the battle would have to be fought afresh.

'Be brave, dear,' she said. 'I know you will be glad afterwards.' And finally she gained full permission to pronounce Cecil Cartwright's sentence irrevocably, and was solemnly entrusted with a heart-shaped locket containing his picture and a curl of his hair, and a bunch of faded forget-me-nots in an envelope on which was written, 'With Cecil's love,' all of which Mrs Trench tearfully explained she had promised only to return if she wished everything to be over between them.

'But,' she insisted, 'you are on no account to say that I don't care for him any more—only that I mean to try not to, because I know I ought to give him up. And I dare say,' she added reluctantly, 'it will be a relief in the end.'

'I will explain,' said Helen, soothingly, and then she locked the little packet away amongst her most private papers.

But Cecil Cartwright never received it from her hands, because the day after the ship left Aden, Mrs Kenwithin died suddenly and quietly of failure of the heart, and the husband, who had awaited

A PERVERTED PUNISHMENT

her arrival so impatiently at Bombay, was obliged to return to the square, thatched bungalow with only her boxes and personal belongings.

For him there followed days of bitter, aching darkness, during which he did his work mechanically, and wandered about the house and compound like a man in a dream, his wife's luggage piled unopened in her room, and the old ayah lingering disappointedly in the back premises.

Then at last Cartwright interfered, and offered to forgo his leave to England if Kenwithin would accompany him on a shooting tour in Assam. But the Major absolutely refused to take advantage of the other's good nature. So, finally, Cartwright took his furlough and departed, and perhaps his intended stoppage at Aden on his way home had somewhat to do with his arguing the matter no further.

Therefore it was not until long after Cartwright had gone, and the first agony of his utter loneliness was abating, that Kenwithin forced himself to go through his wife's things, and then it was that the little packet entrusted to Helen by Mrs Trench fell into his hands.



"Then it was that the little packet fell into his hands."

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A year later, when the Bombay mail train steamed into the large, echoing, upcountry station at its accustomed hour, Cecil Cart-

wright and his wife were among the passengers who emerged from it.

The regiment had not been moved during Cartwright's furlough, but various changes had taken place, the most important being the retirement of Major Kenwithin. He had sent in his papers some weeks after his wife's death, which, it was generally understood, had changed him completely. Indeed, the few who had seen his haggard face and wild eyes previous to his departure, feared that it had also affected his reason, which theory was strengthened when it became known that he was not retiring to England like other people, but meant to devote the remainder of his existence to sport in India.

Cartwright had written to his cousin on hearing of his retirement, but, receiving no answer, and being the worst of correspondents, had not done so again until shortly before his return, when he announced his approaching marriage with the widow of Colonel Trench.

'I believe our marrying so soon after her husband's death is considered positively indecent,' he wrote; 'but I have cared for her for so long. Do you remember my telling you about it the evening you had returned from seeing poor Helen off?'

He had expected an answer to his news to meet him at Bombay, but none was forthcoming, and therefore his surprise and delight were unbounded when, amongst the usual crowd on the platform, he caught sight of a face which (though altered so as to be hardly recognisable) he knew to be Kenwithin's.

'Great Scott! there's John!' he exclaimed. 'Wait for me here a minute, Daisy,' and he shouldered and pushed his way through the moving throng. 'John my dear old man! Did you get my letter? Have you come to meet us? How are you, old chap?'

'Yes,' said Kenwithin, inertly, 'I got your letter, and I came to meet you to ask you a question which you can answer here—now.'

Cartwright looked anxiously at the altered face, all his ardour damped in a moment. There was evidently something more the matter with Kenwithin than undying grief at his wife's loss.

'Yes, yes, anything you like, John, only come with us to the hotel, we shall be there until our bungalow is straight. Are you stopping there, or with the regiment?'

'Neither. I wrote to the colonel for the date of your return, and I came by this morning's train. I shall go on by this one when

you've told me what I want to know. Get into this carriage with me—we have only ten minutes more'—and he pushed the other into the empty first-class compartment before which they had been standing.

'But my wife—'

'Hang your wife! Look here, listen to me! Until I got your last letter I thought that—that—you and Helen—'

'Helen!'

'Look at that!' and he thrust a crumpled packet into Cartwright's astonished fingers; 'look at your infernal picture! look at your hair; look at the flowers, "with Cecil's love"—what does it all mean?—speak, man, explain.'

Cartwright had opened the packet in silence.

'Yes, I can explain,' he said calmly. 'These things were given to Helen for me by my wife. The two were in the same cabin as far as Aden. Helen persuaded her to give me up—she told me when I saw her at Aden on my way home, and I suppose I ought to have written to you about it. But I never dreamt—it never even occurred to me that you would think it was Helen for one moment. Why didn't you write and ask me? Good Heavens! imagine your suspecting her like that!'

'Stop!' cried Kenwithin, hoarsely. 'Do you think I don't loathe myself? But it is your fault—yours! You said there was no harm in that cursed intrigue of yours with another man's wife! Well, there was this harm in it, that it has blasted my life, it made me wrong her memory! I could kill you! Get out of the carriage—the train's moving,' and before Cartwright could answer he found himself on the platform. The crowd of natives yelled and surged, the hot odour of curry and ghee and black humanity rose around him, and he stood dazed and apprehensive, seeing as through a mist the bright figure of his wife waiting patiently for him by their luggage, while the train sped on through the warm, quivering, afternoon air, carrying a man who sat with his face hidden in his hands, suffering the torture of bitter, hopeless regret.

'Helen! Helen!' he moaned, 'forgive! forgive!'



AN EASTERN ECHO

‘HASAN! Husain! Hasan! Husain!’

The cry rose perpetually from hundreds of Mohammedan throats, hoarse with violent reiteration, yet ever strengthened by excitement and religious fervour.

It was the day of the great Muharram, one of the most important of Mohammedan religious festivals in Northern India, when gorgeously decorated tazias (or models of the tomb of Hasan and Husain, the two martyred nephews of the Prophet) are annually borne in memorial procession through the city streets out into the country, where, with much ceremony and ostentatious lamentation, they are either buried or cast into a tank.

All through the long, hot midday streams of frenzied mourners, with their gaudy pasteboard and tinsel sepulchres, had been pressing through the crowded, stifling streets of a small Mofussil town, and thence for half a mile along the white, glaring grand-trunk road¹⁰ to the temporary burying-ground. Fierce, fanatical Mohammedans shouted, howled, and tore their clothes, beating their hairy chests and throwing themselves on the ground in a fervour of sorrow; others strode along half-naked, shrieking with ardent zeal and dancing madly at intervals, while here and there passed groups of disapproving Hindus, sullen and silent, whose curiosity and love of excitement had drawn them irresistibly into the throng; women ran with fluttering clothes and wild eyes along the outskirts of the procession, and children clung to them, also echoing shrilly the universal cry, in tones of inconsolable lamentation: ‘Hasan! Husain! Hasan! Husain!’

High above the moving sea of turbans wobbled the tazias, incongruously gay with tinsel, paint, and coloured muslin, the

¹⁰ Dating back to the sixteenth century and the “great road” of Pashtun emperor Sher Shah Suri (Sher Khan), the Grand Trunk Road runs across northern India and connects the eastern and western regions of the subcontinent. During the British Raj period, the road, also known as “the Long Walk,” ran from Calcutta to Peshawar.

bearers of these erections struggling manfully along, perspiring under their weight, jostling each other and still joining in the perpetual cry. Now and then a dispute would arise, often resulting in a free fight, as each possessor of a tazia hustled and pushed his neighbour in his efforts to secure a foremost position in which to display his tribute of respect to the dead, and his own violence of emotion.

The police had been hard at work from early dawn keeping order, protecting the weakly, regulating the processions, and nipping incipient battles in the bud. And as the afternoon wore on, the European police-inspector lifted his helmet many times from his hot, aching forehead, and sighed with weariness. Up and down, backwards and forwards, shouting, swearing, ordering, choked with dust, parched with heat, he had been on duty for hours, and as he rode past he threw an envious glance into the large, cool tent which had been erected by order of the magistrate of the district under a giant fig tree on the line of the procession. It contained a few ladies and one or two officials, comfortable wicker chairs, and a tempting refreshment-table covered with fruit and iced drinks. The magistrate himself, who had also been in the city for the best part of the day, was now sitting cool and clean with the party he had invited to view the Muharram. He noticed how flushed and tired looked the inspector's handsome face.

'Will you get down and have a whisky and soda, Somerton?' he called, with an involuntary tinge of patronage in his voice, for a police inspector is a subordinate whose rank corresponds somewhat to that of a sergeant in the army.

There was a slight hesitation in Somerton's manner before he replied. He glanced at the ladies, and his sun-burned cheeks deepened in colour, but another glimpse of the refreshment-table behind their white skirts decided him.

'Thank you, sir,' he answered, dismounting, and followed Mr Sinclair into the tent. The ladies watched him with curiosity as he passed them, for they had heard, on good authority, that the inspector was a gentleman by birth.

'They say his grandfather was an earl,' whispered the police-officer's wife to a girl who sat by her side.

'I can quite believe it,' answered the girl, fixing her blue eyes on the strongly-marked profile of the man who was lifting a tumbler to his lips.

'He has only come here on special duty, just for the Muharram, as my husband was so short of men,' continued the police-officer's wife, 'so I don't suppose I shall have time to take any notice of him. I try to make a point of knowing something of my husband's subordinates, though when they have no wives to go and see it makes it more difficult. I should think I might have him to dinner quite by himself, as he's supposed to be a gentleman.'

'I should think so, indeed!' answered the girl, impetuously, 'and I, for one, should be very glad to be asked to meet him.'

'Oh, Miss Murray, what would Mr Sinclair say if he heard you?' glancing in laughing reproof at the glittering engagement ring on the girl's finger. 'But it does seem absurd, I admit,' she added, 'when a man is a gentleman, though my husband says discipline must be observed, and you cannot with any justice treat subordinates as equals. Perhaps he will get a commission some day, and then he will be all right. They say his present position is all his own fault. He wasted his money, and gambled, and drank, and ruined himself, and did all kinds of such dreadful things that a police-inspectorship in India was all his family influence could get for him.'

Meg Murray made no answer, but her eyes strayed again to the two men standing at the back of the tent. One so straight, so broad, so tall, with the peculiar, delicate lift of nostril and upper lip that betrays blue blood, the finely-poised head covered with slightly waving hair, and the long, well-bred hand holding the tumbler. The other thin, spare, pale, with grizzled hair and moustache, and an habitual weary expression, due to long office hours and heavy responsibility, yet with a certain air of dignified reserve and undoubted mental power that commanded respect, and made him the excellent ruler of a difficult district that he was.

Meg's heart ached for a moment. The latter was the man she was to marry that day week. The former was just the type of man she would have—She checked the thought hurriedly, aghast at herself, and resolutely turned her mind to the widowed mother in a cheap country town, whose life had been a long, harassed struggle to educate her children on an inadequate income. Meg was well aware how great a sacrifice had been made in sending her out to relations in India, in the unspoken hope that there she might marry into her own class—which she would have little chance of doing in England.

She was an unusually lucky girl, hastily reflected Meg, to be marrying such a thoroughly good, nice man, who was also sufficiently well off to retire the instant he had earned his pension—which would be a month or two after their marriage. Yes, she was certainly very fortunate, and she liked and esteemed Henry Sinclair above all men, only—She looked again at the stalwart figure of the inspector, with its easy, distinguished carriage, turning to leave the tent, and as Somerton passed her and their eyes met, she forgot she was engaged, forgot he was a subordinate, forgot she was a self-respecting young lady, and smiled at him involuntarily. He put his hand to his helmet as though to raise it, but checked himself, and saluted instead; then passed out leaving her flushed, breathless, and ashamed of herself.

‘A fine-looking fellow,’ she heard Sinclair saying in smooth, clear tones, ‘but a very regrettable case—every chance—plenty of money—good old family—all chucked to the winds. A great pity. However, he may do well yet. He has worked splendidly to-day, but those fellows always do when anything out of the ordinary is going on. It’s over the daily routine they fail one as a rule. Hallo!’ with an apprehensive start, ‘what has happened?’

The monotonous shouts of the moving crowd had suddenly given place to an irregular, confused hubbub of sound, which presently rose to a roar, bearing down from the city. The portion of the procession then passing in front of the tent came to an abrupt halt and spread chaotically. Mr Sinclair hurried out and was met by an agitated native policeman, who incoherently announced that the Hindus had destroyed a tazia in the city, and that a desperate row had ensued. A tearing, fighting mob of raging Hindus and Mohammedans was advancing down the road, and the police, insufficient in number and worn out with the day’s work, were powerless to check it. Mr Sinclair rushed to his horse, and galloped towards the moving mass of infuriated, struggling people.

The ladies rose quickly, and asked with alarm if there was any danger? Was the tent likely to be thrown down? What were they to do? The few men who were with them told them to remain in their places, and assured them they were perfectly safe, then stationed themselves outside to avert any possible rush.

But Meg Murray had approached the front of the tent unnoticed, to look out. She felt nervous and apprehensive, and thought of the Mutiny and horrible tales of massacres. Would

anyone be killed? She shivered at the idea. Somerton's bold brown face rose before her, and immediately afterwards Sinclair's tired eyes. She peered through the yellow clouds of dust and haze at the moving, indistinct mass that came nearer and nearer with a deafening turmoil—the thud of blows on flesh, the shouts, and clattering of hoofs, and above it all rang the fanatical yell, 'Hasan! Husain! Hasan! Husain!' no longer in mournful lamentation, but with triumph and fury in its note.

'Keep back, keep back!' shouted someone to her. 'Go inside!'

But at that moment there was a sudden break in the struggling crowd, then a rush of tazias as the Mohammedans gained the advantage, and Meg saw Somerton in the very front of the mêlée, urging his horse against it, and dealing blow after blow in his efforts to restore order.

'He will be killed!' she sobbed, under her breath, and ran blindly out into the road. The crowd overtook her at once, and she was swept down into the choking dust under myriads of trampling feet.

It was Somerton who, seeing what had happened, promptly dismounted, and, from sheer strength and determination, succeeded in dragging her out of danger before any real harm came to her. Faint, bruised, shaken, she lay in his arms sheltered behind a roadside tamarind tree, while the crowd surged past.

'You are all right,' he said protectingly, as she opened her frightened blue eyes and attempted to stand up. 'Don't move,' and taking out his handkerchief, he began to flick the dust from her hair and dress.

'What possessed you to leave the tent like that?' he inquired reproachfully, as her colour came slowly back.

'I hardly know,' she faltered. Then, with a sudden overpowering impulse, she raised her eyes to his. 'I was afraid you would be killed,' she said softly.

She heard his heart beat loudly, saw the blood rise above the line of sunburn across his forehead, and a quick flash light up his eyes; she noticed the long, dark eyelashes, the little golden ends to the dusty moustache, and the sharp curve of the lips as they opened to speak—then closed firmly without a word.

The next moment he had placed her gently against the tree, and was standing before her respectful and solicitous; the inspector again—the subordinate.

'I hope you feel better; could you walk to the tent? Or shall I

fetch you something to drink? 'The worse of the row is over now, so you need not feel frightened. Ah! Here is Mr Sinclair, now you will be all right.'

As the magistrate approached in anxious haste, Somerton moved away, and Sinclair was too full of agitation and relief at finding Meg unhurt to think at the moment of calling the inspector back to thank him for having saved her.

However, the following morning he sent for Somerton, and in a becoming and well-considered little speech, conveyed to him his appreciation of his promptitude and courage.

'And I am sure Miss Murray would like to thank you herself,' he concluded.

'She is very kind, but I think she will forgive me when I say I would much rather she did not. I am glad to have been of service.' Then he paused. 'Do you know what induced her to leave the tent at that particular moment?' he added, the formality dropping out of his voice.

A slight colour rose in Sinclair's pale face.

'I fancy she must have feared I was in danger,' he answered, somewhat consciously. 'No doubt you have heard that Miss Murray is to become my wife very shortly.'

Somerton looked at the other man with a curious glance, and smiled furtively. Then, with a stifled sigh, he took up his helmet. 'I wish you every happiness, sir,' he said, and, saluting, passed out into the verandah with his sword clanking after him.



"Faint, bruised, and shaken, she lay in his arms sheltered behind a roadside tamarind-tree."

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Margaret Sinclair leaned lazily back in her comfortable garden chair, lulled by the soft English summer air, the drone of the bees in the lime blossoms above her head, the heavy scent from an adjacent petunia bed, and her husband's voice reading sleepily aloud from a magazine. Two years of married life had passed very happily and peacefully for her. Prosperity, comfort, an increasing affection for her husband and the birth of her child had filled her existence completely, and the few months she had spent in India now seemed almost as far behind her as the days of her childhood. Sinclair himself had greatly improved in appearance, for rest, change and happiness had taken the weary expression from his eyes, and added flesh to his spare frame. It would have been hard to find a more peaceful picture than the well-kept English garden sloping towards the river from the substantial red brick house, and the happy, contented, sleepy couple under the trees on the lawn.

Presently Sinclair ceased reading, and smiled as he saw that his wife had fallen into a sound sleep. The smile was full of love and tenderness, and taking a light Indian shawl from a chair, he arranged it gently over her feet. Then he leant back and closed his eyes.

Half an hour slid by in the warm, uninterrupted silence of a summer's afternoon, and then Mrs Sinclair stirred uneasily in her sleep. Her husband roused himself and bent over her laughingly. It was teatime, and she must be awakened.

'What did you say?' he inquired, as she murmured something.

Again a sleepy movement and an incoherent sentence. Then two words—loud, clear and distinct—'Hasan! Husain!'

She sprang up startled and bewildered.

'What did you say, Henry?' she demanded nervously. 'Did you speak, or did I?'

'You, Meg. You were talking in your sleep and dreaming about India. You shouted out, "Hasan! Husain!" as enthusiastically as any Mohammedan—which reminds me that the Muharram must just be on now. Last week's papers said rows were expected, because the Hindu festival, the Dasahra, clashes with it this year. I wonder how my old district will get on.'

Mrs Sinclair smoothed her hair and shook a few leaves from

her dress.

'I'm hardly awake yet,' she said. 'I was not dreaming about India or the Muharram, and I can't think why I should have called that out. Don't talk about it. I hate being reminded of that day.'

But she was reminded of it again two days later, for while she was busy with the coffee at breakfast, her husband opened the Indian weekly paper and began to scan the telegrams. Presently he uttered an exclamation.

'You remember Somerton, the police-inspector, who pulled you out of the Muharram row two years ago?' he inquired.

'Yes,' she replied quickly, with a little guilty blush. 'What about him?'

'I see he has been killed in a Muharram-Dasahra riot. They seem to have had the devil's own trouble. Poor fellow! What an awful thing! I shall always remember him with gratitude, for he undoubtedly saved your life.'

Mrs Sinclair sat white and silent. Killed—and probably at the very moment that the funeral cry had burst unconsciously from her lips! Instantly the scene of two years ago came vividly back. The well-appointed, comfortable English dining-room with the long French windows and the bright garden beyond, melted into a dusty yellow haze, and the bronzed face of the police-inspector rose before her. She saw the golden-tipped moustache, the little aristocratic lift of nostril and upper lip, and the suppressed emotion in the handsome eyes. She was alone with him again in the blinding glare of dust and heat, and ringing in her ears were the trampling of many feet, the rattle of tazias, the confused yells of rage and religious frenzy, and, above it all, the piercing cry, 'Hasan! Husain! Hasan! Husain!'

'Margaret, what on earth is the matter with you? You look as if you had seen a ghost! Nurse has been at the window with baby for the last two minutes, and you haven't taken the slightest notice of him. You unnatural little mother!'

She started, and passed her hand across her forehead.

'I was thinking of that poor fellow's death,' she said, and going to the window, she took the laughing, radiant little boy in her arms and kissed him absently, her blue eyes full of tears.

The calm tranquility of her life had been suddenly stirred in its depths by the vague suspicion of something for ever missed and unattainable; and she felt that, though the surface might still shine

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on unruffled in the sun of a placid happiness, the undefined vibration of a regretful memory would lurk beneath; but deep down, covered over, and perchance in time almost forgotten.



A MAN'S THEORY

JOHN ORCHARD was one of those irritating people who are born with a talent for what is commonly called 'knowing best.' As a child he was detested by his companions because he invariably tried to correct and improve their methods of playing games; as a youth he was loathed by his contemporaries because of his pedantic ways and opinionated self-complacency; as a man he was unpopular because he never hesitated to contradict, and lay down the law, (the annoying part being that he was so often right), and, after he married, his wife's affection for him changed to hatred, this story will explain why.

He was a prig of the first water, and a very successful prig, too. He did splendidly at school so far as learning was concerned. He conducted himself with caution and credit at college. He passed first of his year into the Indian Civil Service, and apparently, knew more about the country and the natives before he went out than did many men with twenty years' experience of both. He comported himself with the calm self-confidence of a being of mature age, he was well-read, clear-headed and far-seeing, and his first twelve months in India promised exceedingly well for his future career.

During the second year of his service he was transferred to a large military station, and there poor Mr Orchard led the life of a dog, owing to the 'roasting' he received from the subalterns of the various regiments. He was dragged from his bed in the small hours of the morning and made to ride his washerman's donkey round his own garden. He was tossed in a tablecloth after a big club dinner, together with the glass and crockery, remains of desert and wine-dregs. He was insulted, buffeted, laughed at, chaffed, until he was utterly and completely miserable, and with tears of rage and mortification in his eyes besought his commissioner to transfer him to a more congenial atmosphere. Many men would have profited by the experience, and emerged wiser, if sadder, individuals, but Orchard's trials merely had the effect of planting in his breast a deadly and eternal hatred of all things military, and of making him more dictatorial and opinionated than ever.

He was sent to a very small civil station, where his talents and position found some recognition, that is to say he could argue and assert as much as he pleased in the little club, without danger of contradiction, except of a deferential nature. He gave dinner-parties to the few ladies the place could boast of, and showed them the proper way to manage servants and order meals. Having private means of his own, he was much respected, and the delightful manner in which he had arranged his rooms was greatly admired. He was also good-looking (in a rather commonplace, uninteresting way), and he had not been settled in his new quarters more than six months before he discovered that he had found considerable favour in the eyes of the civil surgeon's pretty little daughter. Mary Forde took him at his own valuation, and thought him perfect. She was a single-hearted, unselfish girl, who, being motherless, had been educated under the care of a maiden aunt at Bedford, until she was old enough to join her father in India. Orchard was the first man who had paid her any serious attention, and it is doubtful if he would have done so, had he not one evening suddenly caught the admiring gaze of her soft blue eyes fixed upon him, while he was expounding his theories on whist to a man who had been an adept at the game when John was yet a schoolboy.

He began to think about Mary Forde. He considered that a man with money of his own, and good prospects, might safely marry early in life without harming his career. It gave him more social standing, and established a home, provided that the girl was healthy, good-tempered and obedient. In his own case he was fully aware that, matrimonially speaking, he could do vastly better for himself than propose to Mary Forde, but, at the same time, he was genuinely attracted by her quiet manner and sweet face, and felt convinced he might do a great deal worse. He gave himself six weeks to consider the matter, during which time Mary was miserable, doubting whether he really meant to propose, and torturing herself with the conviction that if he did she was not nearly good enough for him.

At the end of the allotted time he drove to the civil surgeon's house one morning before breakfast. (John was exactly the kind of man who would propose before breakfast.) He found Mary busy in the garden among the roses, and half an hour later she was his promised wife.

The wedding took place some three months from that date. He chose her trousseau (he had excellent taste), he selected her ayah, he made all the arrangements for the ceremony, and allowed her no voice in any matter at all. She meekly acquiesced in everything, so certain was she always that John knew best, a theory that coincided entirely with John's ideas.

They were married in April, and shortly afterwards were transferred to one of the hottest and driest stations in Northern India. There was no question of Mary going to the hills, for, as John replied to an interfering friend who had suggested such a proceeding, 'a wife's place was with her husband. His wife, thank goodness, was young and strong, and if he could stand the heat she could, too.' And indeed, Mary would have been the first to cry out against such a plan had she been given any choice in the matter.

She bore the hot weather remarkably well, thus justifying John's opinion, and it was not until after her baby was born, the following summer, that she began to show any symptoms of flagging.

'Better send her to the hills,' advised the doctor.

'Nonsense,' replied Orchard; 'she will pick up directly the child is a little older. She shall wean him in three months, and a baby is always better in the heat. In two or three years we shall take him home and leave him there.'

Mrs Orchard's slender hands clasped the small bundle closer to her. Leave him at home when he was so little, and would forget her! Awful thought! But if John said so, it would have to be. She had begun to recognise of late that his will was cruelly inexorable. At anyrate, he was quite right about the hills now, she would feel stronger later on, and she could never desert her husband. Still, during the long, stuffy nights, when the sheets of her bed felt as if they had just been removed from the front of a roaring fire, when the hot winds howled all day, and sometimes all night, and John would not allow wet grass screens in the doorways because he considered them unhealthy, she longed and craved for a breath of cool, pure air. She lay awake night after night gasping for breath, and patiently patting and soothing the child, that cried and whined continuously with the irritation of prickly heat and mosquitoes. It was a pet theory of her husband's that babies should never be carried up and down, or even moved from their beds when they cried at night.

'Get the child into good habits from the beginning,' he would

say, 'and it will save an infinity of trouble afterwards, besides laying an excellent moral foundation for his future character. A child should never be allowed its own way in anything.'

Therefore, when John junior yelled and screamed in the night-time, his mother was obliged to lie and listen to him until John senior was sound asleep (nothing ever seemed to disturb his rest), and then followed hours of patient cronings and patings, and pacing up and down the room, until the little fellow fell unwillingly asleep and was unconsciously restored to his cradle.

The days and nights grew drier and hotter and more unendurable. Mrs Orchard became thinner and paler and unnaturally nervous. The sight of a rat in her bedroom one night sent her into hysterics, and it took all her husband's sternest rebukes to calm her down. She slept little and ate less, and wore herself out during the day housekeeping and looking after the child—now nearly six weeks old. She had no English nurse, because John considered a good ayah far better for a young baby, and he was no doubt right; but Mary could never feel any confidence in an ayah, and consequently did far more for the child herself than was really necessary.

So continued her sleepless nights and busy days, until she could hardly drag one foot after the other, and at last, one evening when they were sitting together in the drawing-room after dinner, John noticed the change in his wife.

'You want a tonic,' he announced, 'and you must get more sleep at night. The child must be put into another room with the ayah. You must have got him into ridiculously bad habits allowing him to disturb you so. Once a baby is in its cot it ought to go to sleep without any fuss. Children in England sleep all night through.'

'But, John, dear, the nights are so awful out here at this time of the year. No one can sleep' ('except you,' she might have added), 'and poor baby is a mass of prickly heat.'

'He is a self-willed little beggar, and he must be taught how to behave himself. I can't have him wearing his mother to a skeleton. Now, Mary, don't move,' as a fretful cry arose from the bedroom. 'He knows you will go and pat him to sleep if he makes enough noise, and he's only trying it on.'

'But the ayah has gone to her food, and he is alone,' she said anxiously, half rising; but her husband laid a restraining hand on

her arm. The fretful cry went on.

'He will stop in a minute,' he said, with his smile of superior wisdom, 'when he finds you take no notice.'

Mary lay back in her chair unwillingly, and sighed. The night was stifling, and crowds of motley insects were buzzing and beating round every lamp in the room, while the lizards licked them down wholesale. There was a dense haze of dust and heat in the air, and outside the stars were scarcely visible, while the harsh hum of crickets and the barking of weary dogs were the only sounds that cut through the thick, hot stillness. The cries from the bedroom increased gradually until baby was roaring lustily. John Orchard put out a warning hand.

'Don't move,' he said again, in a voice of authority. 'Discipline can't be commenced too early, and the sooner he learns that he cannot have his own way the better for us all. The young man has a fine temper of his own, I must say!'

'Oh, John, I must go to him. Something is wrong. He never cries like that for nothing.'

'Doesn't he? I've heard him often enough. The only difference is that he has never before howled like that without your going to him. I'm determined you sha'n't be a slave to that child, Mary. It's nothing but sheer temper, a regular cry of rage.'

He took up the newspaper and read calmly. Mary began to cry. She dared not openly disobey her husband, she had never done such a thing even over the smallest matter.

Presently the screams grew less violent, and changed to a feeble wail.

'What did I tell you?' said John, triumphantly. 'After to-night you will have no more bother with him. Now he has stopped. He's tired of making such a row and has gone to sleep.'

He looked up from the paper and found that Mary had noiselessly left the room. The next moment her heard a shriek (certainly not from the baby) followed by a crash.

'Damn!' he muttered, and, rising reluctantly from his chair, he crossed the hall and entered the bedroom, which was quite dark, and as he advanced, his foot struck against something that clattered. It was the hand lamp that usually stood on the bedroom mantelpiece.

'Mary?' he said doubtfully, with fear creeping through his veins. There was no answer. He fetched a lamp from the hall, and saw

his wife lying on the floor by the cradle, a huddled, unconscious heap. He held the light aloft and peered into the little bed. The baby face was white and still, the tiny fists tightly clenched. From the child's neck a narrow red stream trickled across the sheet, and on the pillow, hesitating whether to go or stay, and with its head and paws dyed crimson, sat a large grey rat.



THE SUMMONING OF ARNOLD

ONE of the many lessons that the great Mother India instils into the hearts of her white foster children is to sympathise with one another's troubles and misfortunes however trivial or however serious.

Therefore, when Mrs Arnold, the Collector's wife at Usapore, was suddenly ordered home by the doctor, and Arnold could not get leave to go with her, it was sympathy with the husband's lonely unhappiness that made Williamson offer to move over to Arnold's bungalow and see him through the weary separation.

The offer was gratefully accepted, for the Arnolds had not been married long, and the man was missing his wife, and worrying about her ill-health to the verge of melancholia. So Williamson established himself in one half of the large, echoing bungalow, though there was no doubt that the move was somewhat inconvenient to himself; in fact, he admitted as much to me afterwards, when he was telling me of the horrible thing that happened while he was there.

But, being a thoroughly unselfish, good-hearted fellow, he thought little of his own inclinations and only endeavoured to prove a cheery companion, and help the other on from one English mail day to the other.

Arnold simply lived for the mail, and yet when his wife's letters did come he would be almost afraid to open them, in case she might be worse, or anything had had happened. Williamson sometimes found it very difficult to keep his friend's spirits up to the mark, circumstances being unfavourable from every point of view. To begin with, Arnold himself was not in the best possible health, having had typhoid fever the previous year; he had the work of a large and turbulent district on his shoulders, no light burden; Usapore itself was a dismal, sandy little civil station; and, to crown it all, there seemed every prospect of the rains failing (which would mean a famine), and the heat was already beyond description.

However, the two men played mild tennis in the afternoons and whist in the baking little club in the evenings, and when they were alone they talked about Mrs Arnold's last letter, and Arnold read

bits of it aloud to Williamson, and always wound up by groaning over 'his infernal luck.'

'Why didn't I take leave six months ago when I could have got it?' he would reiterate 'and then Lilla wouldn't have been ill, and I should not have felt such a worm myself. But I hung on to escape the hot weather. I've never felt really fit since I had typhoid, and I believe it has played the dickens with my heart. And then this anxiety about Lilla is simply driving me mad. I'm in such a funk that she makes light of things not to worry me, and doesn't tell me what the doctors really say.'

But, in spite of these forebodings, Mrs Arnold's letters continued to be very fairly satisfactory. She declared that she was better, that the air of Dover, where she was staying with her mother, was certainly doing her good, and the doctor hoped that in a few weeks she might be able to drop the rôle of invalid.

This sort of thing went on for several mails, and sometimes Arnold was in boisterous spirits, looking forward to his wife's return with the advent of the cold weather, while at others he plunged into the lowest depths of depression.

Then at last, one fatal evening, the English mail brought a letter from Mrs Arnold, saying that directly she could bear the move she was to go up to London to see a specialist. She besought her husband not to be anxious, the only reason for such a step being, she assured him, that the doctor thought she gained strength too slowly, and that, on the whole, it would be wiser to have the best advice.

Of course Arnold was in despair. That night, after eating no dinner, he sat outside on the plot of scorched grass in front of the house and surrendered himself to the gloomiest of views; and when bed-time came he refused to go in, saying he knew he should not sleep.

So Williamson lit another pipe and made up his mind to stay there too, because it was the kind of night in India when, if a man is not happy, he probably begins to wander about the compound with a revolver to shoot pariah dogs that bark and keep him awake, and sometimes, instead of a dead dog, it is the man who is found shot, through the roof of his mouth. So Williamson watched Arnold very carefully, and tried to induce him to talk instead of sitting huddled up in his chair, with his hands hanging down at his sides.

'Buck up, old man!' he said encouragingly. 'If there'd been any bad news you would have had a telegram.'

'She may not have seen the London man yet,' replied Arnold. 'She said in her letter she thought it would be a fortnight before she could go.'

'Well, it's more than a fortnight since that letter was written. You look at the black side of things too much. Besides, he added awkwardly, 'she wouldn't like it if she could see you now, Arnold. You know her one wish is that you shouldn't worry.'

Arnold straightened himself wearily.

'I know, I know,' he said, as if ashamed of his weakness. 'But when you care about a woman with all your heart and soul, Williamson, it's hell when you think there's any danger of losing her. Lilla is everything in the universe to me, and the parting from her was awful—our first parting! I wonder how a man manages to live out his life if his wife dies and he was really devoted to her—' He paused, and there was a dreary silence, broken presently by the harsh scream of the brain fever bird rising to a desperate pitch and then subsiding.

'You'll laugh, perhaps, when I tell you,' he went on hesitatingly; 'but when she left me she said that if she died she would come straight to me first, and I gave her the same promise on my side. If anything happens to Lilla she will come herself and tell me, she will come and fetch me. I believe this with every atom of my being.'

Williamson did not laugh. He felt a little cold thrill run down his back, and actually caught himself looking nervously over his shoulder. He was not a superstitious man by any means, but Arnold's voice sounded so unnatural; the surroundings looked so weird in the increasing light of the rising moon, which threw the long black shadow of a clump of bamboos across the dried-up patch of uneven grass; and the magnetic stillness in the thick, hot atmosphere was severed at intervals by the desperate cry of the brain fever bird, as it flew restlessly from tree to tree.

Williamson mentally called himself an ass. 'You'd better go to bed, Arnold,' he said bluntly; 'and if you apply for sick leave I'm sure you'll get it.'

Arnold laughed a little.

'Oh! I'm all right,' he said, 'and with a famine coming on I can't well ask for leave unless I'm actually too ill to work, which I'm not, and I don't think any doctor could honestly give me a certificate.'

Williamson thought otherwise, and determined to speak to the civil surgeon the next morning. In the meantime it was midnight, and if Arnold would only go to bed so much the better for them both.

‘Come along,’ he urged; ‘you’ll sleep all right if you go to bed now. The air will cool down very soon.’

They rose and went to their rooms, and shortly afterwards no sound was to be heard in the house or compound but the monotonous cry of the bird that would not rest.

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Williamson undressed and threw himself on his bed. He listened at first to satisfy himself that Arnold was not moving about, and once he got up and crept to his friend’s door, but there was only silence, so he went back to his room, and presently fell into an uneasy sleep.

An hour or two later he was suddenly awakened by the loud sound of a voice calling. He sat up, the echo of what he had heard still ringing in his ears: ‘Lilla! Lilla!’ He could only conclude that Arnold had been shouting his wife’s name in his sleep, so he waited a few moments, and the brain fever bird’s discordant shriek rose and fell in the air. Perhaps that was what had disturbed him, the cry was not unlike the two syllables repeated over and over again.

He listened intently, and finally got up. He put on his slippers and, taking his hand lamp, made his way to Arnold’s open door. He did not speak, for if Arnold were asleep, it would never do to wake him, but he moved the curtain quietly to one side and looked into the room.

The punkah was swaying slowly to and fro, and Arnold was lying on his back, covered with a sheet. He seemed all right, but still Williamson was not quite satisfied. He carefully advanced, then stopped and looked apprehensively about him, sniffing the air, for it was full of a strong and unmistakable odour of chloroform.

The fear seized him that Arnold had committed suicide, and he hurried to the bedside. The smell of chloroform was overpowering, and, half choked with the fumes, he shouted at Arnold, and shook him desperately. There was no movement, no response. Faint and giddy, he rushed from the room, roused the servants and sent for

the doctor, who, when he came, confirmed Williamson's fear, and said that Arnold was dead.

'Where is the bottle?' he said, when all restoratives had failed and hope was at an end.

'I couldn't see any bottle,' said Williamson, feeling as though he were in a nightmare. 'I looked, but I couldn't see anything. The smell was awful when I came into the room, and only a few minutes before I could have sworn I heard him shouting in his sleep. That was what woke me. It must have been hideously quick work.'

'It would have been,' said the doctor; 'his heart was so weak, it would not have taken very much to kill him.'

'Then you ought to have made him go on sick leave.'

'I suggested it when his ordinary leave was refused, but he said he wasn't bad enough, and I don't know that he was, if he had let himself alone. And then, with the prospect of a famine, a man can't conscientiously bolt unless he's in a hopeless way;' then, after a pause— 'Had he a medicine chest anywhere?'

'I don't think so, but we'll look.' They looked, but found nothing, and they also questioned the punkah-coolie, who could give them no information beyond the fact that he had fallen asleep, and he thought the sahib had shouted to wake him.

So the doctor said it was one of those mysteries which would probably never be explained. Arnold had certainly killed himself with chloroform, but had taken some extraordinary precaution beforehand that the bottle should not be discovered.

But early next morning a telegram came from London for Arnold, which was opened by Williamson and the doctor. It told them that Mrs Arnold had died while under chloroform, during an operation that had proved absolutely necessary.

'There,' cried Williamson, losing all self-control and beating his hands together like a maniac. 'That explains it! That's why there was no bottle—no trace of one! She came to fetch him—he said she would! He told me so only a few hours before. Oh! my God!'—and he sank into a chair, shuddering and shaking.

The doctor fetched some brandy.

'My dear fellow!' he said soothingly, 'pull yourself together. You're over-strung. Drink this and go and get some sleep, or I shall be sending you home on sick leave next.' Which he afterwards had to do, for Williamson was very ill, and for some

EAST OF SUEZ

weeks it was doubtful whether he would get over it. But he did recover, and was sent home, and just before he sailed he told me this story.



IN THE NEXT ROOM

LONG years after I had shaken the sandy soil of Usapore from my feet, I met a lady on board a P. and O. steamer to whom I told the story of Arnold.

‘I could tell you a story about Usapore, too,’ she said, ‘only nobody ever believes a word of it.’

‘I would believe anything you told me,’ I replied, ‘and anything about Usapore that was unpleasant. Tell me the story now, we have half an hour before dinner, and your husband is still playing whist.’

So she allowed herself to be persuaded, and it appeared that only the previous year ‘George,’ her husband, who was a Bengal civilian, had been suddenly ordered to Usapore in the middle of the hot weather, and she, being a model wife, made prompt preparations to accompany him.

‘And would you believe it,’ she said, still sore at the recollection, ‘my cook and butler refused to come with me! I had been so kind to them, given them good wages, and clothes, and medicine, and everything they wanted, and I imagined they would never leave us. However, they did, and we had to rely on picking up others at Usapore. We had an awful journey, the heat, flies and dust simply indescribable, and the dāk bungalow to end with. You must know what a ghastly little building that is.’

‘Indeed, I do,’ I sighed in sympathy.

‘Well, then we could not get a house, every bungalow was occupied, and our predecessor had been a bachelor and chummed with some other men. So at last we had to take a ruin belonging to a native, that had been built in the old days long before the Mutiny. Perhaps you remember it? Down by the river.’

‘I think I do,’ I said, searching my memory; but it was only occupied by natives then as far as I recollect.’

‘It is pulled down now, I believe, and a good thing too, for, in spite of what George or anyone else may say, that house was haunted!’

‘Really!’

‘Yes, and you shall hear all about it if you have the patience to

listen. It was a rambling old stone building, with fairly good verandahs, but filthy dirty and very much out of repair. However, three of the rooms were quite habitable, which were really all we needed, as we only expected to remain in the place for about three months. We had brought our camp furniture with us, and were soon able to leave the miseries of the dâk bungalow. I had got a cook, but no khansamah, and had almost made up my mind to do without one, when a man suddenly presented himself and his written characters and requested to be taken into our service. The characters were good and the man's appearance respectable, so I engaged him.

'The first night in our new quarters passed quietly enough, but the next morning, just after George had started for office, my ayah entered my room crying.

"Mem-sahib," she whimpered, "do not keep the new khansamah. The watchman's wife tells me—"

I interrupted her and said I would not listen to tales of the other servants, so she said no more, but all the same I felt a little curious, and in consequence observed the new man closely when he came for orders. There certainly was something rather peculiar about him, though what I could not exactly say, and as I had no fault to find with him I dismissed him from my thoughts.

'A fortnight passed away, and then one night I awoke very suddenly with a conviction that something had roused me. I first thought that the punkah had stopped, but found I was mistaken, and gradually I became aware of a sound in the drawing-room, out of which our bedroom opened, and I sat up to listen.

'An indistinct murmur of two voices was going on in the next room, with something in the sound that was oddly familiar to me, though at the moment I could not name what it recalled to my mind. Thinking that for some reason the servants must have come into the house, I called out, but received no answer, neither did the low murmur cease. I got out of bed, and, taking the hand lamp from the dressing-table, I peered with it into the drawing room. All was dark, and the noise suddenly stopped. I called two or three times, and the watchman, hearing me, came into the verandah. He declared nobody had been about, that all the servants, with the exception of himself and the punkah-coolies, were asleep in their quarters, and no one had entered the bungalow. I concluded I must have been dreaming, and went back to bed puzzled and restless.

"The incident worried me so that I told my husband about it in the morning, and as he only said that it must have been the punkah-coolies talking, I dropped the subject to avoid argument. I saw him drive off to the Courts, and then sent for the khansamah to bring me his daily accounts. He began reading them out in the usual nasal monotone, "soup—eggs—fowls," etc., when it flashed across me in a second that this was what the sounds had reminded me of the previous night—a servant and his mistress going through the daily accounts! The murmur of the voices came back to me with redoubled distinctness, and I could only imagine that I had dreamt I was listening to myself taking down the items.

"Two or three nights afterwards the same thing happened again. I woke up with a start, and instantly my thoughts reverted to my dream, but this time I was positive I was wide awake. Nevertheless, there was a low murmur of voices in the drawing-room. I could have sworn to its being a native giving in his accounts to his mistress, and I could even distinguish the woman's voice as she acknowledged each item. I woke George, then sprang out of bed, and rushed with the lamp to the drawing-room door, followed sleepily by my husband, but directly I entered the room not a sound was to be heard except the chirrup of a musk-rat as it scuttled round the walls.

"Dreaming again," said George.

In spite of his unbelief I insisted on his going through all the rooms and verandahs with me, and even out into the garden, where we found the watchman asleep, and while the unlucky sleeper was being shaken and abused I went back to bed feeling somewhat small, but at the same time determined to leave no stone unturned until the mystery was solved. With great difficulty I persuaded George to stay awake for an hour, but to my intense annoyance we heard nothing. I began to doubt my own senses, and George made idiotic jokes about my having eaten cheese toast at dinner.

News came the next day of a disturbance in the district, and George was obliged to hurry off at a moment's notice, making the best arrangements he could, as he did not expect to get back for the night. The same evening I went for a long ride by myself, and returned rather late. I paused on my way through the drawing-room to turn up the shaded lamps, and as I did so I was surprised to see Eli Bux, the new khansamah, standing by my writing-table

with a kitchen knife and an old account book in his hands. Then I saw him walk into my bedroom, and, calling his name, I followed him. But when I entered the room he was not there.

I knew my eyes had not deceived me, for I particularly remarked that the man seemed to stoop a good deal, which I had never observed in him before. I called the ayah and asked if Eli Bux had passed through my room, but she declared he had not. I sent her into the kitchen to inquire what he had been doing in the drawing-room, but she returned with the startling announcement that the khansamah had gone to the city early in the afternoon and had not yet returned. The ayah naturally concluded that I should be vexed at the idea of his absenting himself just when dinner should have claimed his attention, and, seizing the opportunity, she once more burst forth into abuse of Eli Bux, but I snubbed her again, as, in any case, it was none of her business.

I felt a little nervous when I went to bed that night, and lay sleepless for a long time, half expecting to hear the voices in the drawing-room, and hardly knowing whether I hoped or dreaded that I should do so. I wondered again if I had really heard them, or if they simply existed in my imagination. If the former, I felt that there must be something strange in connection with the house; if the latter, that I must be out of sorts and require a doctor's advice.

I must at last have fallen into a doze, for I suddenly opened my eyes to see by the dim, lowered light of the lamp, the figure of a native man standing by my dressing-table with his back towards me. I caught sight of his face reflected in the glass. It was Eli Bux!

I watched him for about a minute, and saw that he was ransacking my dressing-table drawers and opening the various little boxes in which I kept pins and scraps of jewellery. He put his hand under the looking-glass, and I knew he was feeling for the rings and brooch I wore every day. I was literally paralysed with fright, and felt as if I had been turned to stone, when the man looked into the mirror and caught sight of my reflection, open-mouthed and horror-struck, watching him from the bed. He turned slowly round, and in his hand was a long, sharp knife.

I tried to scream, but my voice failed me, and we remained motionless staring at one another. The punkah was still, and the mosquitoes were buzzing savagely round my bed. The man took a step toward me. Then another. His eyes glittered, and his fingers felt along the edge of the knife—

‘Suddenly a sound broke the stillness. The voices were in the drawing-room, and this time louder and clearer than they had ever been before. Eli Bux started and looked wildly round. So he, too, could hear the voices! He listened for a second. Then an expression of abject terror crossed his face, and with a hoarse yell he rushed out into the verandah. I heard a muffled cry as of someone choking, followed by a heavy fall.

‘I felt sure he was murdering the punkah-coolies, and then my presence of mind returned. I sprang out of bed and ran into the drawing-room; all was quiet there again, not a sound to be heard. I ran through the hall and into the front verandah, where I called and shouted at the top of my voice, and stepped down on to the gravel path meaning to make my way to the servants’ quarters. But I had hardly gone two yards when my heart again stood still with fear. I saw something moving in the deep shadow of the trees, and a pariah dog flitted past me in the moonlight, uttering a ling, dismal howl.

‘It was more than my over-strung nerves could bear. Scarcely knowing what I was doing, I fled like a hunted creature back into the house, and had barely reached my room when I fell to the floor in a dead faint.

‘When I recovered consciousness it was broad daylight, and George and the doctor were bending over my bed, while the ayah stood weeping copiously in the background expressing her firm conviction that I was quite dead. When I swallowed some brandy, and been made to keep quiet for an hour, I was strong enough to tell George my story, not forgetting the part that “the voices” had played. He heard me to the end with a grave face, and then told me that Eli Bux had been discovered dead in my verandah. The watchman and the two coolies had been drugged, and on the ayah coming to call me in the morning she had found the two coolies still in a heavy sleep, with the dead body of Eli Bux between them. My watch and rings were found in his pocket, and it was subsequently proved on examination that he had died from heart disease, from which he must have been suffering for years previously.

‘When I was better I called the ayah and gave her leave to tell me all she knew about the khansamah, and, delighted at obtaining a hearing, she poured forth a voluble tale as to Eli Bux having been an accomplished scoundrel, and added that his father had been a

great deal worse. Then she paused, and I impatiently told her to continue.

“Surely the mem-sahib has heard what happened in this house?” she said, and when I shook my head she told me that the father of Eli Bux had been khansamah to a lady in that very bungalow when the Mutiny broke out, that her husband was shot while he was at office, and that the butler cut his mistress’s throat in the drawing-room and ran off with all the jewellery and money he could find.

“And the watchman’s wife,” continued the ayah with relish, “says that Eli Bux had lots of that poor mem-sahib’s jewellery buried somewhere, given him by his old father when he lay dying.”

‘After this I felt I could stay in that horrible bungalow no longer. George did not believe the ayah’s story, and declared it was all a native yarn, but I know it was true, for I heard the spirit voices of that unfortunate woman and her murderer, and the man I saw in the drawing-room was the ghost of Eli Bux’s father. Those voices saved my life, for if Eli Bux had not heard them and, knowing what they were, died of the fright, he would have cut my throat. What do you think about it?’ she concluded abruptly.

‘I entirely agree with you,’ I responded with fervour. ‘Did you ever hear the voices again?’

‘No, George sent me off to the hills, and joined me there directly his three months at Usapore were over, but he lived on in that awful house till he left the place. He says he never saw or heard anything unnatural, and to this day he exasperates me beyond words if I mention the story before him, by making silly references to cheese toast and indigestion!’



THE WHITE TIGER

HE was called the White Tiger by the villagers of the district because his yellow skin was pale with age, and his stripes so faded and far apart as to be almost invisible.

Having grown too large and heavy for cattle killing with any ease, he had lately become a man-eater, and terrible were the stories told by those who had seen him, and escaped the fatal blow of his huge paw. He was described as being the size of a bull-buffalo, with a belly that reached the ground, and a white moon between his ears, true tokens of the man-eater, as every native of India knows. He was said to have the power of assuming different shapes, and to lure his prey by the imitation of a human voice, and certainly his craft and cunning were such that not even Mar Singh, the local shikaree,¹¹ had ever been able to trap him, or obtain a shot at him with his famous match-lock gun. And Mar Singh had seen the tiger often, knew his favorite haunts and lairs, and could point out the very trees upon which he preferred to sharpen his murderous claws.

The brute continued to levy his terrible tax on the scanty population of a remote district, until the women and children were afraid to leave the village, and the men went out to work in the fields fearing for their lives. At last the increasing number of victims attracted the attention of the local authorities, and a reward of a hundred rupees was placed on the head of the White Tiger, with the result that Mar Singh, who clothed himself in khaki with a disreputable turban to match, and was regarded in his village as the wariest of hunters, redoubled his efforts to bring about the destruction of this awful scourge. Also, now that the fame of the White Tiger's misdeeds had penetrated to headquarters, it was more than likely that a party of 'sahibs' would appear on the scene with

¹¹ From the Hindi word *shikari*, meaning "a sportsman." The term can refer to an Indian native who hunts for his own livelihood, or one who guides Europeans on hunting excursions. Shikarees were generally low-caste Hindus.

elephants and rifles, in which case, though the tiger would be doomed, the reward would be distributed amongst the mahouts and the beaters, and Mar Singh himself would only receive a share.

So night after night he perched in the branches of the trees above the favourite routes of the enemy, and from sunrise to sunset he haunted the outskirts of the jungle, and hung about the drinking pools in the bed of the shrinking river, for (unlike his cattle and game-killing brothers) the man-eater may be sought for at all hours. But to no purpose, the White Tiger seized a plump human victim once every few days, and Mar Singh's vision of the reward grew faint.

'The striped-one is surely an evil spirit, and no beast at all!' said Mar Singh, who never uttered the word tiger if he could help it, for fear of ill-luck.

He had come in weary and crestfallen from a long day's search, having actually caught a glimpse of the White Tiger, and followed the tracks of the huge, square pugs to the edge of a thorny thicket, without the chance of a shot that could have taken effect; and he was pouring out his irritation and disgust to Kowta, his half-brother, who sat at the door of the family hovel contentedly smoking a hookah.

'Without doubt,' agreed Kowta, 'and therefore would it not be wiser to let the sahib slay the Evil One if he be able?'

'What sahib?' asked Mar Singh sharply, pausing in the act of cleaning the precious match-lock gun, which was the envy and admiration of the village.

'Then thou hast not heard the news?' said Kowta, innocently. 'A sahib has pitched his camp within one day's march of the village, and they say he has come to hunt the White Devil.'

The dreaded blow had fallen, and Mar Singh danced with rage.

'I will give him no news of the tiger. I will tell him nothing, and see, too, that thou remainest silent, Kowta, when he sends for information, else will it be the worse for thee!'

Kowta twiddled his big toe in the dust, always a sign of hesitation with a native, and Mar Singh scented trouble. He knew that Kowta was heavily in debt to the village usurer, and that sahibs often paid well for news of a tiger's movements. He was also aware that Kowta was jealous of his standing and reputation in the village, which would be increased ten-fold could he but destroy the tiger and earn the magnificent reward.

THE WHITE TIGER

He changed his tone.

'See, brother,' he began insinuatingly, 'the utmost that the sahib would give thee might, perchance, be ten rupees, and thy share of the Government reward would scarcely be more than two. What are twelve rupees compared with forty, added to half the whiskers and claws of the Evil One, and perhaps the lucky bone as well? All this will I give thee when I slay the beast, as I most assuredly must do if the sahib doth not interfere.'

Kowta puffed stolidly at his hookah and was maddeningly silent.

'Also,' continued Mar Singh, eagerly, 'consider the trouble that a sahib's camp brings upon a village. His servants, being rascals, will order supplies in the name of the sahib, and pay us nothing for them, and the police will annoy us if we complain. We shall be forced to beat the jungle, and many will be hurt and some killed, if not by the tiger then by other wild beasts, also—'

'But,' interrupted Kowta, cautiously, 'how can I tell that thou wilt give me the forty rupees and half the claws and whiskers? Whereas, a sahib holds to his promises, as we all know.'

'I swear it!' cried Mar Singh with fervour, 'by the skin of the White Devil I swear to deal well by thee!'

So, after some further argument, Kowta reluctantly agreed to take his brother's side, and Mar Singh unfolded a scheme by which Kowta was to proceed to the tents of the unwelcome Englishman, and pose as the shikaree of the district possessing an intimate knowledge of the tiger's habits. Mar Singh would keep Kowta well informed as to the movements of the tiger through the medium of the postman who ran from village to village with news and letters, and the sahib, at all hazards, was to be led in the wrong directions, until he grew weary of the fruitless chase, and withdrew from the district with his camp and elephants.

Kowta, therefore, proceeded to don the khaki costume, which he had long coveted, and the next morning he started on his diplomatic errand, while Mar Singh betook himself to the jungle to watch the movements of the White Tiger, that he might warn Kowta by the evening runner as to which locality must be avoided the following day.

Kowta enjoyed himself immensely at the camp. He arrived at sundown, and was interviewed by the sahib himself, to whom he gave voluble, but entirely false, information concerning the tiger,

and promised to lead him direct to the animal's lair in the morning. The sahib, being young and new to the country, retired to bed in happy anticipation, and Kowta repaired to the kitchen tent, where, surrounded by the servants, he sat smoking his hookah and relating blood-curdling tales of the doings of the White Tiger.

Natives seldom sleep till far on in the night, and therefore the gathering was at its height when the jingle of bells told of the postman's approach, and Kowta, explaining to the company that he was expecting news of his dying grandmother, went out into the moonlight to meet him. The chink-chink of the bunch of bells grew louder, and mingled with the regular grunts of the runner, and Kowta, stepping forward into the sandy path, checked the man's rapid trot.

'Oh! brother!' he saluted, 'what word from Mar Singh, shikaree?'

'Kowta, there is no word from the mouth of Mar Singh, thy brother, seeing that but an hour after thy departure he was slain by the White Tiger on the outskirts of the grazing plain, and Merijhan, the cow-herd, saw it happen. I bring the evil news to thee fresh from thy village.'

For a moment Kowta was paralysed by the horror of the dreadful and unexpected news. Then he asked questions, and learned that his brother's body had been recovered by a party of villagers who had sallied forth with drums and fire-works and had driven the beast from its prey. The mangled remains now lay in the family hut, and Kowta's presence was required to make arrangements for the funeral.

Kowta slipped some coppers into the postman's willing hand, and charged him to keep silence as to the catastrophe when delivering letters in the camp. Then he collected his belongings, and left a plausible message for the sahib to say he had been summoned to his grandmother's deathbed, but would return with all haste the following day. He set out in the moonlight along the narrow jungle path, bordered by tall grass higher than his head, and walked rapidly, though the heat was overpowering, until, just as the dawn broke, he came within sight of the village. He strode through the fields of tobacco and young wheat, and saw the bright green parrots flashing to and fro in the vivid yellow light; partridges ran from beneath his feet, calling shrilly as they disappeared behind the clumps of dry grass; and he could hear the jungle fowl in the

distance crowing to the rising sun. Everything was awake and glowing with life, and the dark interior of the hut, where the women were wailing and the atmosphere seemed charged with death, formed a sharp contrast to the outside world.

The mangled body of the dead man, torn and chewed by the tiger, lay on the string bedstead, surrounded by a noisy group of mourning relatives. There was nothing for Kowta to do but arrange for the remains to be taken to the burning-ground in the evening, and to attempt to pacify the wailing throng, until, as the fierce, hot noon came on they gradually dispersed, and even the widow of the dead man sought a siesta in a neighbour's hut, while Kowta sat down on the threshold of his home to think.

An idea had been slowly forming in his brain which brought with it a wave of exultation. Why should not he compass the destruction of the White Tiger, and so earn the whole reward? He was in debt to the money-lender, and he also greatly desired a plot of land that was for sale just outside the village, and the hundred rupees would not only free him from debt, but would also purchase the coveted little piece of ground. It was true that Mar Singh himself had never succeeded in shooting the White Tiger, but then his difficulty had always been the want of suitable bait, whereas now,—Kowta glanced back into the shadow of the hut and shivered, remembering the native belief that the soul of the tiger's victim becomes the servant of the slayer, and is bound to warn the master when danger threatens.

Mar Singh's spirit might or might not be in bondage to the White Tiger, but, in any case, the hundred rupees was worth some risk, and with proper precautions there should be little or no danger, seeing that the match-lock gun had been recovered uninjured. Kowta rose and looked up and down the little village street. Not a breeze stirred the giant leaves of the plaintain trees, not a bird uttered a note, not a voice broke the breathless calm, every creature except himself was wrapped in slumber.

He made up his mind. He would attempt the plan, and afterwards, whether he succeeded or failed, he could deny all knowledge of the disappearance of his brother's body. And encourage the suggestion, which would naturally arise, that the sorcery of the White Tiger had spirited the corpse away. So he gathered the wreck of Mar Singh into a bundle, wrapping it in his own white cotton waist-cloth, and with the loaded match-lock over

his shoulder, went swiftly through the sleeping village and out into the fields, invoking on his errand the blessing of Durga, the goddess who rides the tiger. Thence he took a narrow jungle path with tangled shrubs closing over his head, and as he emerged from this on to the bushy, broken ground leading to the river, he gathered a leaf from the nearest tree and muttered,—

‘As thy life has departed, so may the striped-one die.’

He walked up the pebbly bed of the dwindling stream till he reached a pool of clear water, in the wet margin of which were printed countless tracks of animals that had drunk there during the night. Wild pig, jackal, fox, hyena, deer, all had slaked their thirst, but the White Tiger had not been of the company. A hundred yards off lay another pool, and around it Kowta found a solitary track—the big, square pugs of the beast who, by common consent of the other jungle inhabitants, had been given a wide berth, and allowed to drink alone.

The marks were not more than a few hours old, and Kowta followed them cautiously, grasping the gun, and dragging his other burden behind him along the gravelly sand. The footprints led him to some rocky boulders, on the summit of which a family of monkeys sat peacefully hunting for fleas, a sign that the tiger was not on the move, else would they have been crashing and chattering in the nearest trees, and pouring forth torrents of abuse. The pugs led on round the rocks to a shady thicket of thorn bushes in a deep ravine, and Kowta felt that he had tracked the White Tiger to his lair.

He had laid his brother’s body close to the edge of the thorny thicket, and then cast about for a safe retreat within easy shot, but no climable trees were at hand, the cover consisting of low, shrubby bushes. The only suitable place of concealment seemed to be the nearest rock, behind which it would be easy to hide and yet command a good view of the bait.

The odour of the dead body tainted the air as the sun blazed full upon it, which suited Kowta’s purpose well, for tigers prefer their food as carrion, and hunger would soon bring the beast forth. Kowta lay down behind the rock and waited. A hot, high wind was blowing, and the sand from the river bed, getting into his eyes, made them smart, but he paid no heed to the discomfort, and only watched the thicket intently for the least movement.

He held his breath when, presently, something rustled and crept

THE WHITE TIGER

out—merely a mangy little jackal with loosely-hanging brush, who sprang four feet into the air as he came suddenly on Mar Singh's body. Then the animal uttered the long, miserable wail known as the 'pheeaw cry,' and ran back into the thicket, causing Kowta's heart to beat high with hope, for he knew the jackal was a 'provider,' one that gives notice to the tiger when food is to be found.

Now, without doubt, the Evil One would steal forth, and nothing could then prevent a shot at such close quarters taking effect. A pea-fowl screeched wildly, and Kowta could hear the agitated flapping of its wings, that also was a token that the tiger moved. The monkeys set up a chatter and scuttled from the rocks. He was coming—the White Devil, the evil striped-one!

Kowta waited breathless, his pulses throbbing in his ears, thinking of the hundred rupees and the plot of ground that were now almost his own, and gazing fixedly over the sickening, twisted limbs of the mutilated body only a few yards from him.

The tension was terrible, and the cracking of a dry twig behind him sounded almost like the report of a gun, he felt a surging in his brain, and, as another stick snapped, some irresistible power compelled him to turn his head.

There, five yards behind him, crouched the White Tiger, that with silent steps and awful cunning had stalked him from the village. The ears were flattened to the broad head, the long white whiskers bristled and quivered, the wicked yellow eyes glared, and held the man helpless, spell-bound with horror, waiting for the spring that came with a hissing, growling roar, as the White Tiger claimed yet another victim.



CAULFIELD'S CRIME

CAULFIELD was a sulky, bad-tempered individual who made no friends and was deservedly unpopular, but he had the reputation of being the finest shot in the Punjab, and of possessing a knowledge of sporting matters that was almost super-human. He was an extremely jealous shot, and hardly ever invited a companion to join him on his shooting trips, so it may be understood that I was keenly alive to the honour conferred on me when he suddenly asked me to go out for three days' small game shooting with him.

'I know a string of jheels,'¹² he said, 'about thirty miles from here, where the duck and snipe must swarm. I marked the place down when I was out last month, and I've made arrangements to go there next Friday morning. You can come, too, if you like.'

I readily accepted the ungracious invitation, though I could hardly account for it, knowing his solitary ways, except that he probably thought I was unlikely to assert myself, being but a youngster, and also he knew me better than he did most people, for our houses were next door, and I often strolled over to examine his enormous collection of skins and horns and other sporting trophies.

I bragged about the coming expedition in the club that evening, and was well snubbed by two or three men who would have given anything to know the whereabouts of Caulfield's string of jheels, and who spitefully warned me to be careful that Caulfield did not end by shooting me.

'I believe he'd kill any chap who annoyed him,' said one of them, looking round to make sure that Caulfield was not at hand. 'I never met such a nasty-tempered fellow, I believe he's mad. But he can shoot, and what he doesn't know about game isn't worth knowing.'

Caulfield and I rode out the thirty miles early on the Friday morning, having sent our camp on ahead the previous night. We found our tents pitched in the scanty shade of some stunted dāk jungle trees with thick, dry bark, flat, shapeless leaves, that clattered

¹² Tract of marshy ground [Perrin's note].

together when stirred by the wind, and wicked-looking red blossoms. It was not a cheerful spot, and the soil was largely mixed with salt which had worked its way in white patches to the surface, and only encouraged the growth of the rankest of grass.

Before us stretched a dreary outlook of shallow lake and swampy ground, broken by dark patches of reeds and little bushy islands, while on the left a miserable mud village overlooked the water. The sun had barely cleared away the thick, heavy mist, which was still slowly rising here and there, and the jheel birds were wading majestically in search of their breakfast of small fish, and uttering harsh, discordant cries.

To my astonishment, Caulfield seemed a changed man. He was in excellent spirits, his eyes were bright, and the sullen frown had gone from his forehead. 'Isn't it a lovely spot?' he said, laughing and rubbing his hands. 'Beyond that village the snipe ought to rise in thousands from the rice fields. We sha'n't be able to shoot it all in three days, worse luck, but we'll keep it dark, and come again. Let's have breakfast. I don't want to lose any time.'

Half an hour later we started, our guns over our shoulders, and a couple of servants behind us carrying the luncheon and cartridge bags. My spirits rose with Caulfield's, for I felt we had the certainty of an excellent day's sport before us.

But the birds were unaccountably wild and few and far between, and luck seemed dead against us. 'Some brutes' had evidently been there before us and harried the birds, was Caulfield's opinion, delivered with disappointed rage, and after tramping and wading all day, we returned, weary and crestfallen, with only a few couple of snipe and half a dozen teal between us. Caulfield was so angry he could hardly eat any dinner, and afterwards sat cursing his luck and the culprits who had forestalled us, till we could neither of us keep awake any longer.

The next morning we took a different route from the previous day, but with no better result. On and on, and round and round we tramped, with only an occasional shot here and there, and at last, long after mid-day, we sat wearily down to eat our luncheon. I was ravenously hungry, and greedily devoured my share of the provisions, but Caulfield hardly touched a mouthful, and only sat moodily examining his gun, and taking long pulls from his whisky flask. We were seated on the roots of a large tamarind tree, close to the village, and the place had a dreary, depressing appearance. The

yellow mud walls were ruined and crumbling, and the inhabitants seemed scanty and poverty-stricken. Two ragged old women were squatting a short distance off, watching us with dim, apathetic eyes, and a few naked children were playing near them, while some bigger boys were driving two or three lean buffaloes towards the water.

Presently another figure came in sight—a fakir, or mendicant priest, as was evident by the tawny masses of wool woven amongst his own black locks and hanging in ropes below his shoulders, the ashes smeared over the almost naked body, and the hollow gourd for alms which he held in his hand. The man's face was long and thin, and his pointed teeth glistened in the sunlight as he demanded money in a dismal monotone. Caulfield flung a pebble at him and told him roughly to be off, with the result that the man slowly disappeared behind a clump of tall, feathery grass.

'Did you notice that brute's face?' said Caulfield as we rose to start again. 'He must have been a pariah dog in a former existence. He was exactly like one!'

'Or a jackal perhaps,' I answered carelessly. 'He looked more like a wild beast.'

Then we walked on, skirting the village and plunging into the damp, soft rice fields. We put up a wisp of snipe, which we followed till we had shot them nearly all, and then, to our joy, we heard a rush of wings overhead, and a lot of duck went down into the corner of a jheel in front of us.

'We've got 'em!' said Caulfield, and we hurried on till we were almost within shot of the birds, and could hear them calling to each other in their fancied security. But suddenly they rose again in wild confusion, and with loud cries of alarm were out of range in a second. Caulfield swore, and so did I, and our rage was increased ten-fold when the disturber of the birds appeared in sight, and proved to be the fakir who had paid us a visit at luncheon-time. Caulfield shook his fist at the man and abused him freely in Hindustani, but without moving a muscle of his dog-like face the fakir passed us and continued on his way.

Words could not describe Caulfield's vexation.

'They were pin-tail, all of them,' he said, 'and the first decent chance we've had since we came out. To think of that beastly fakir spoiling the whole show, and I don't suppose he had the least idea what he had done.'

‘Probably not,’ I replied, ‘unless there was some spite in it because you threw a stone at him that time.’

‘Well, come along,’ said Caulfield, with resignation, ‘we must make haste as it will be dark soon, and I want to try a place over by those palms before we knock off. We may as well let the servants go back as they’ve had a hard day. Have you got some cartridges in your pocket?’

‘Yes, plenty,’ I answered, and after dispatching the two men back to the camp with what little game we had got, we walked on in silence.

The sun was sinking in a red ball and the air was heavy with damp, as the white mist stole slowly over the still, cold jheels. Far overhead came the first faint cackle of the wild geese returning home for the night, and presently as we approached the clump of palms we saw more water glistening between the rough stems, and on it, to our delight, a multitude of duck and teal.

But the next moment there was a whir-r-r of wings like the rumble of thunder, and a dense mass of birds flew straight into the air and wheeled bodily away, while the sharp, cold atmosphere resounded with their startled cries. Caulfield said nothing, but he set his jaw and walked rapidly forward, while I followed. We skirted the group of palms, and on the other side we came upon our friend the fakir, who had again succeeded in spoiling our sport. The long, lanky figure was drawn to its full height, the white eyeballs and jagged teeth caught the red glint of the setting sun, and he waved his hand triumphantly in the direction of the vanishing cloud of birds.

Then there came the loud report of a gun, and the next thing I saw was a quivering body on the ground, and wild eyes staring open in the agony of death. Caulfield had shot the fakir, and now he stood looking down at what he had done, while I knelt beside the body and tried hopelessly to persuade myself that life was not extinct. When I got up we gazed at each other for a moment in silence.

‘What are we to do?’ I asked presently.

‘Well, you know what it means,’ Caulfield said in a queer, hard voice. ‘Killing a native is no joke in these days, and I should come out of it pretty badly.’

I glanced at the body in horror. The face was rigid, and seemed more beast-like than ever. I looked at Caulfield again before I

spoke, hesitatingly.

'Of course the whole thing was unpremeditated— an accident.'

'No, it wasn't,' he said defiantly. 'I meant to shoot the brute, and it served him right. And you can't say anything else if it comes out. But I don't see why anyone should know about it but ourselves.'

'It's a nasty business,' I said, my heart sinking at the suggestion of concealment.

'It will be nastier still if we don't keep it dark, and you won't like having to give me away, you know. Either we must bury the thing here and say nothing about it, or else we must take it back to the station and stand the devil's own fuss. Probably I shall be kicked out of the service.'

'Of course I'll stand by you,' I said with an effort, 'but we can't do anything this minute. We'd better hide it in that long grass and come back after dinner. We must have something to dig with.'

Caulfield agreed sullenly, and between us we pushed the body in amongst the thick, coarse grass, which completely concealed it, and then made our way back to the camp. We ordered dinner and pretended to eat it, after which we sat for half an hour smoking, until the plates were cleared away and the servants had left the tent. Then I put my hunting-knife into my pocket, and Caulfield picked up a kitchen chopper that his bearer had left lying on the floor, after hammering a stiff joint of a camp chair, and we quitted the tent casually as though intending to have a stroll in the moonlight, which was almost as bright as day. We walked slowly at first, gradually increasing our pace as we left the camp behind us, and Caulfield never spoke a word until we came close to the tall grass that hid the fakir's body. Then he suddenly clutched my arm.

'God in heaven!' he whispered, pointing ahead, 'what is that?'

I saw the grass moving, and heard a scraping sound that made my heart stand still. We moved forward in desperation and parted the grass with our hands. A large jackal was lying on the fakir's body, grinning and snarling at being disturbed over his hideous meal.

'Drive it away,' said Caulfield, hoarsely. But the brute refused to move, and as it lay there showing its teeth, its face reminded me horribly of the wretched man dead beneath its feet. I turned sick and faint, so Caulfield shouted and shook the grass and threw clods of soil at the animal, which rose at last and slunk slowly away.

It was an unusually large jackal, more like a wolf, and had lost one of its ears. The coat was rough and mangy and thickly sprinkled with grey.

For more than an hour we worked desperately with the chopper and hunting-knife, being greatly aided in our task by a rift in the ground where the soil had been softened by water running from the jheel, and finally we stood up with the sweat pouring from our faces, and stamped down the earth which now covered all traces of Caulfield's crime. We had filled the grave with some large stones that were lying about (remnants of some ancient temple, long ago deserted and forgotten), thus feeling secure that it could not easily be disturbed by animals.

The next morning we returned to the station, and Caulfield shut himself up more than ever. He entirely dropped his shooting, which before had been his one pleasure, and the only person he ever spoke to, unofficially, was myself.

The end of April came with its plague of insects and scorching winds. The hours grew long and weary with the heat, and dust storms howled and swirled over the station, bringing perhaps a few tantalising drops of rain, or more often leaving the air thick with a copper-coloured haze.

One night when it was too hot to sleep, Caulfield suddenly appeared in my verandah and asked me to let him stay the night in my bungalow.

'I know I'm an ass,' he said in awkward apology, 'but I can't stay by myself. I get all sorts of beastly ideas.'

I asked no questions, but gave him a cheroot and tried to cheer him up, telling him scraps of gossip, and encouraging him to talk, when a sound outside made us both start. It proved to be only the weird, plaintive cry of a jackal, but Caulfield sprang to his feet, shaking all over.

'There it is again!' he exclaimed. 'It has followed me over here. Listen!' turning his haggard, sleepless eyes on me. 'Every night that brute comes and howls round my house, and I tell you, on my oath, it's the same jackal we saw eating the poor devil I shot.'

'Nonsense, my dear chap,' I said, pushing him back into the chair, 'you must have got fever. Jackals come and howl round my house all night. That's nothing.'

'Look here,' said Caulfield, very calmly, 'I have no more fever than you have, and if you imagine I am delirious you are mistaken.'

He lowered his voice. 'I looked out one night and saw the brute. It had only one ear!'

In spite of my own common sense and the certainty that Caulfield was not himself, my blood ran cold, and after I had succeeded in quieting him and he had dropped off to sleep on the couch, I sat in my long chair for hours, going over in my mind every detail of that horrible night in the jungle.

Several times after this Caulfield came to me and repeated the same tale. He swore he was being haunted by the jackal we had driven away from the fakir's body, and finally took it into his head that the spirit of the murdered man had entered the animal and was bent on obtaining vengeance.

Then he suddenly ceased coming over to me, and when I went to see him he would hardly speak, and only seemed anxious to get rid of me. I urged him to take leave or see a doctor, but he angrily refused to do either, and said he wished I would keep away from him altogether. So I left him alone for a couple of days, but on the third evening my conscience pricked me for having neglected him, and I was preparing to go over to his bungalow, when his bearer rushed in with a face of terror and besought me to come without delay. He said he feared his master was dying, and he had already sent for the doctor. The latter arrived in Caulfield's verandah simultaneously with myself, and together we entered the sick man's room. Caulfield was lying unconscious on his bed.

'He had a sort of fit, sahib,' said the frightened bearer, and proceeded to explain how his master had behaved.

The doctor bent over the bed.

'Do you happen to know if he had been bitten by a dog lately?' he asked, looking up at me.

'Not to my knowledge,' I answered, while the faint wail of a jackal out across the plain struck a chill to my heart.

For twenty-four hours we stayed with Caulfield, watching the terrible struggles we were powerless to relieve, and which lasted till the end came. He was never able to speak after the first paroxysm, which had occurred before we arrived, so we could not learn from him whether he had been bitten or not, neither could the doctor discover any scar on his body which might have been made by the teeth of an animal. Yet there was no shadow of doubt that Caulfield's death was due to hydrophobia.

As we stood in the next room when all was over, drinking the

dead man's whisky and soda, which we badly needed, we questioned the bearer closely, but he could tell us little or nothing. His master, he said, did not keep dogs, nor had the bearer ever heard of his having been bitten by one; but there had been a mad jackal about the place nearly three weeks ago which his master had tried to shoot but failed.

'It couldn't have been that,' said the doctor; 'he would have come to me if he had been bitten by a jackal.'

'No,' I answered mechanically, 'it could not have been that.' And I went into the bedroom to take a last look at poor Caulfield's thin, white face with its ghastly, hunted expression, for there was now nothing more that I could do for him.

Then I picked up a lantern and stepped out into the dark verandah, intending to go home. As I did so, something came silently round the corner of the house and stood in my path. I raised my lantern and caught a glimpse of a mass of grey fur, two fiery yellow eyes, and bared, glistening teeth. It was only a stray jackal, and I struck at it with my stick, but instead of running away it slipped past me and entered Caulfield's room. The light fell on the animal's head, and I saw that it had only one ear.

In a frenzy I rushed back into the house calling for the doctor and servants.

'I saw a jackal come in here,' I said, searching round the bedroom, 'hunt it out at once.'

Every nook and corner was examined, but no jackal was found.

'Go home to bed, my boy, and keep quiet till I come and see you in the morning,' said the doctor, looking at me keenly. 'This business has shaken your nerves, and your imagination is beginning to play you tricks. Good-night.'

'Good-night,' I answered, and went slowly back to my bungalow, trying to persuade myself that he was right.



THE FAKIRS' ISLAND

ON the ramparts of a red sandstone fort, built by Akbar, the great Moghul Emperor, in the days when Elizabeth was our Queen, stood a fair, fresh English girl. She was looking down on a scene that had been enacted year after year for some twenty centuries, with but little variation, save that comparative law and order now reigned where formerly riot, murder, theft and treachery were accepted as a mere matter of course.

Behind the dainty little figure in white towered the rugged red battlements, so indicative of the mighty character of the man who had raised them. Over her head blazed the electric blue of the Easter sky, and below her surged nearly two millions of human beings, who had gathered from all quarters of India to bathe in the holy Ganges River and wash away their sins.

It was the time of the Khoom Mela, or great religious Hindu fair, and the noise that rose on the dry air was deafening; everyone shouted, everyone expostulated, gongs were being banged, bells rung, hymns chanted, and trumpets and conches blown furiously by the priests as they marched in long, fantastic processions towards the river's edge.

The clear blue of the Ganges' water was dulled and soiled for nearly a mile in the direction of the huge iron bridge that crossed her, and over which special trains had been labouring for the last three days, bearing densely-packed crowds of enthusiastic pilgrims.

'What a sight!' said the girl, gazing down at the sea of humanity, 'I believe one could walk on their heads with the greatest ease.'

The man who stood at her side was looking at her, and not at the seething throng below, and the beauty and perfection of her face and figure struck him with a thrill, as it had struck him again and again since she had arrived fresh from England, two months ago, to keep house for her bachelor uncle, who commanded the fort.

George Robertson had fallen deeply in love with Mona Selwyn the moment he had seen her, and he was a man of whose love a girl might have been very proud. A steadfast, honest, self-reliant

soldier, older than his thirty years in mind and character, well-born, well-bred, and with a straight, resolute face.

'Aren't they horrid?' continued the girl, pointing downwards with her white parasol. 'They make such a noise, and kick up such a dust, and smell so nasty. I hate natives.'

'But they are a wonderfully interesting people,' said Robertson, dreamily, thinking of the great civilisation that had been firmly established when Britons were yet barbarians, and that had, nevertheless, practically stood still for hundreds of years.

'I can't say I see anything the least bit interesting in them. Look at them down there like a disturbed ants' nest, making the most awful fuss about bathing in an ordinary river!'

'It's anything but an ordinary river to them, and, after all, it is much the same theory as our baptism.'

'But we don't make such a row about it.'

'No.'

'Why do you say "no" like that? Do you think we ought to shout and scream, and crowd and push, and go quite out of our minds over a religious ceremony?'

Captain Robertson laughed.

'Of course not. But, at the same time, I believe that this people's religion is far more real to them than is ours to us. Some say that is what has kept them at a standstill; but, at anyrate, it is extraordinary what they will voluntarily suffer in its cause. Look over the river at that island. That is where the fakirs, or priests, are quartered during the fair time. I went there this morning and saw a man hanging by his heels to a sort of gallows, swinging his head to and fro through a fire he had lit below him. Another was buried up to his chin in the ground, and had been there for four days. I saw other men lying on beds of long, sharp nails, and one old fellow arrived from Peshawar while I was there, having measured his length the whole way along the ground for hundreds of miles. It is mortification of the flesh with a vengeance. They all believe that such doings will ensure them bliss in after-life, and our own old saints had much the same ideas.'

'Oh! How I should like to go over to the island and see them all! Will you take me there, Captain Robertson, to-morrow morning?'

The man's brown cheek flushed.

'I would rather not,' he said gently. 'I shouldn't like you to go

there.'

'What rubbish!' she uttered pettishly. 'Why did you excite my curiosity about things that would interest me, and then calmly say you won't take me to see them? Why shouldn't I go, pray?'

'You wouldn't like it. You would probably see some very unpleasant sights, and it is dreadfully dirty and smells abominably.'

He thought of the fierce, fanatical faces, the hideous deformities, the lack of clothing on most of the holy men, and the evil attention that the presence of a young English girl would attract in such a crowd.

'You wouldn't like it,' he repeated.

'Yes, I should. And I have set my heart on going. Besides, I know Mrs Calcraft went so why shouldn't I?'

'Mrs Calcraft is an elderly woman, and writes for the papers.'

'All right, if you won't take me I shall ask someone else.'

'I certainly won't take you,' he replied, with a touch of temper.

She was charmed to have made him angry; now she would make him jealous. It gave her an exquisite pleasure to know that she had the power to rouse this man's feelings. It was worth more to her than all the adoring demonstrations of her other slaves. She beckoned to a young man with a fair moustache, who made one of the group near them, and he instantly flew to her side.

'Mr. Kerr, will you take me to see the Fakirs' Island to-morrow morning? It would be an object for a ride.'

'Of course I will! What a lark to see all those old Johnnies burning themselves alive and chopping off each other's heads! Isn't that what they do, Robertson?'

But Captain Robertson had moved off with a sore heart and a set jaw, and though Miss Selwyn laughed and joked with the fair-haired subaltern, there was a little cloud in her blue eyes, and a droop at the corner of her red mouth for the rest of the afternoon.

However, the following morning, when the sun was drawing the mist from 'Mother Ganga's' silver bosom, she rode with young Kerr over the bridge of boats leading to the Fakirs' Island in the gayest of spirits. The long rows of temporary sheds were astir with life; prayers were being chanted, and praises sung to every god and goddess in the Hindu mythology. Holy water was being freely sprinkled over shrines erected for the time being, already gay with offerings of flowers and tinsel decorations. Morning ablutions were being performed, hair clipped, heads shaved, and sacred face-

marks applied. Mona Selwyn and young Kerr got off their horses and walked down the little street, looking about them with lively curiosity.

'There's a man on a nail bed!' she cried, pointing with her whip. 'How hard his back must be. I should have expected him to be an early riser at anyrate!'

'By Jove!' said her companion, putting up his eyeglass. 'I never believed it was true before. He must have a hide like a rhinoceros.'

'Captain Robertson told me he saw a man roasting his head over a fire.'

The delicate colour in her cheeks deepened as she mentioned George's name, and the next moment, with a guilty feeling of shame, she recognised the reasonableness of his objection to her expedition, for a group of almost nude priests passed close by, on their way to the river to bathe, staring boldly at the girl with fierce, blood-shot eyes. One of them whose body was smeared with ashes, and whose hair, matted with tow, hung down to his feet, walked backwards as he gazed at Mona, muttering to himself. She turned away frightened and impatient, and vexed with herself for having come at all.

'He was quite right,' she thought; 'he is always right. I ought to have listened to him.'

'Oh! Look! Look!' cried Kerr, pulling her sleeve and pointing excitedly.

Coming towards them was an ancient fakir, with one arm held high in the air, withered to a stick, and fixed in that position. As he approached, it became apparent that the nails had grown through the palm of the hand, and were protruding at the back. Following him like a dog came a small, humped cow; from its shoulder grew an extra leg, and from its forehead dangled another tail, both having been grafted into the little creature's flesh soon after its birth,—a very sacred animal, rendered still more holy by the cruel deformities that had been practised on it. The old man himself was a loathsome sight. His arm rigid, his long white hair caked with mud, his wrinkled body grey with ashes and hung with filthy rags. Chains clanked on his bony ankles, and he moaned dismally for alms as he proffered his copper begging-bowl to every passer-by. Behind him crawled a crowd of squalid, diseased, half-naked people—professional beggars. Some huge with elephantiasis; others literally dropping to pieces with leprosy, a few sightless from

small-pox, and all covered with sores, and clamouring for alms. The old fakir thrust his begging-bowl in front of Mona and gibbered.

'Oh! what does he want?' she said, shrinking back in horror.

'He wants the stick!' said Kerr, angrily. 'And he shall have it if he doesn't clear off. Git! You old brute,' he added menacingly to the old man, who only raised his voice and wailed a still more discordant demand for money.

The crowd of beggars gathered round, whining, cringing, crawling, stretching out claw-like, hands and fingerless stumps towards the English people, while the little cow stood on the outskirts of the group and lowed plaintively. One woman, her face a mass of corruption, caught Mona's skirt, and dragged herself blindly towards the girl, who shrieked aloud in fear and disgust. Kerr raised his cane and struck the begging bowl from the fakir's hand. It clattered to the ground, and the pressing, whining crowd of beggars shrank back. The old priest's tawny eyes blazed with rage. He raised his living arm aloft until it matched the dead one, standing in a weird, grotesque figure before the angry man and frightened girl. Then he cursed them loudly and venomously—'and thou,' he concluded, glaring at Mona's white face, 'before ten suns have set thy beauty will be gone—thou wilt be as those—' pointing to the mumbling mass of maimed, halt and blind that had withdrawn to a safe distance from the Englishman's cane.

'Oh! come away quickly!' cried Mona, gathering up her habit skirt and seizing her companion's arm. 'I wish I had never come. Why did you bring me? Make haste—' and they half ran up the path between the two rows of huts, from which horrible faces seemed to peer at them on every side.

They rode back to the fort in silence. Kerr with his mind misgiving him for having taken the girl to such a place, Mona with a white, troubled face, haunted by the voice and manner of the old fakir, for she had understood that he was threatening her, though his actual words had been unintelligible. They were a depressed couple as they dismounted in front of the officers' quarters, and Mona did not recover her spirits all day, in spite of the prospect of a ball in the evening. The said ball was also a failure as far as her enjoyment was concerned, for when she arrived at it she was greeted with the unwelcome information, imparted by a casual acquaintance, that Captain Robertson had gone away on a month's

leave.

‘Very sudden, isn’t it?’ she asked, with a sinking heart.

‘Oh, Robertson often goes off like that. He had a letter from a pal in the Dhoon,¹³ asking him to go up there at once for some “para” shooting, so he got his leave and started. He never can resist the chance of a shoot.’

Mona felt hopeless. She wondered if she had been the cause in any way of his departure,—or was it that he was quite indifferent and preferred shooting to herself? She contemplated the coming month with a sensation of utter dismay, as she realised what a blank it would be to her. She wished she had been nicer to him, that she had taken his advice about the Fakirs’ Island, that she could do something to show her penitence. Perhaps if she rigidly abstained from accepting the attentions of any of her other admirers from this time forward, he might, on his return, notice the change, and understand. But, probably, if he thought about her at all, he was thoroughly disgusted with her. Oh! why had she been such an utterly silly, vain, frivolous little fool? Mona cried herself to sleep that night, and the next day, instead of going to a picnic, she stayed at home and studied Emerson’s essays, because George Robertson had once told her she ought to read them.

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Captain Robertson’s leave extended itself to two months before he returned to the station. Work was slack, camps of exercise were over, the hot weather was coming on, and he had been easily spared. Therefore, as his shooting instincts had led him into regions where letters could not follow him, he arrived in blissful unconsciousness that during his absence Mona Selwyn had been at death’s door. He heard it while breakfasting at mess on the morning of his return.

‘Awful hard luck on the girl,’ remarked a subaltern, helping himself to fried bacon, and addressing Robertson. ‘Small-pox, you know, and they say she’s badly marked. Supposed to have caught it

¹³ From the Hindi word *dūn*. The broad, flat valley at the base of the Himalayas. The Dūn of Dehra, located south of Mussooree, was known as “the Dhoon.”

at that beastly fair.'

'How is she now?' faltered Robertson, with a dry tongue and a queer feeling in his throat. He had been making heroic efforts to stifle his love for Mona Selwyn during these two months, but he knew very well he had not succeeded.

'She's practically all right again, and, I believe, out of quarantine; but she won't go anywhere, she's so cut up about the havoc played with her looks. She goes out on the fort walls in the evening, and the Colonel said he hoped fellows would keep out of her way a bit, as she hates to be seen. Beastly hard lines—and such a pretty girl as she was!'

Robertson rose abruptly, letting his knife and fork fall into his plate. He could stand the other's chatter no longer—he must go to his room and be alone to think.

The outcome of his cognitions was that in the cool of the afternoon, when the water-carts were laying the dust on the broad, white roads, and the scent of reviving flowers was stealing on to the freshened air, he drove rapidly down to the fort, and, leaving his dogcart outside, made his way to the ramparts.

In the back verandah of the Colonel's quarters he could see a long couch, with a figure reclining on it. He stood still for a few moments, gazing at the figure, and shading his eyes with his hand, for the evening sun was powerful. Then he walked quickly forwards, down a flight of stone steps, across a yard, up more steps, and finally into the verandah. The girl started, and turned her face towards him. She was greatly disfigured, but the marks were yet fresh, and would lessen with time. The fair, curly hair had been cropped short, and the blue eyes were full of a sadness that cut Robertson to the heart. His love and pity went out to her. Thank God, she was alive, and if she would take his life's devotion it was hers. She gave a distressed little cry, and covered her face with her hands. Robertson knelt down by the couch and drew her hands gently away.

'Mona,' he said.

Tears of weakness, disappointment, misery, ran from her eyes, and she sobbed helplessly.

'Darling, I never knew till this morning, and now I have come to ask you if you will forgive me for going away, and love me a little? I have loved you ever since I first saw you; but I thought I had no chance. Will you let me comfort you, and take care of you,

always—for ever?’

‘I can’t,’ she sobbed. ‘I am so ugly. Look at me!’ She shut her eyes, and resolutely turned her face towards him. He kissed her mouth.

‘It is you I want, dear,’ he said gently and reverently, and then he took her, unresisting, into his arms.

There was a hushed silence in the air, broken only by the monotonous cry of a plover and the splash of oars in the river below. Their thoughts flew back to the day when they had last stood on the fort walls together, and looked down on the restless, seething, excited multitude below and the stained, turbid waters. Now the Ganges flowed softly, blue, clear, still. Nothing marked the banks but a few fishermen and the green patches of water-melon. The sky was flushed crimson with the setting sun, and peace reigned where but a short time before all had been confusion, clamour, dust and strife.



THE BELIEF OF BHAGWAN, BEARER

THE compound was quiet, for, being late in the evening, the servants had deserted to the bazaar, and the only indication that anyone remained was the flicker of a fire in the stable verandah, where the syce's¹⁴ little brown wife sat cooking 'chupatties'¹⁵ for her lord and master's supper.

Her bright black eyes and mahogany-coloured skin reflected the dancing flames, while behind her, faintly discernible in the darkness of the loose box, shone the white muzzle and luminous eyes of the new Australian mare, who snuffed and sighed as the pungent smoke rose in her nostrils.

Chumpa, the syce's wife (who, with Panchoo, her husband, had lately accompanied the mare from Calcutta), smacked and patted the large, flat cakes, and laid them carefully aside as each became ready to await its turn for baking. Now and then she cast anxious glances towards the road, for soon Panchoo would return from the bazaar, whither he had departed in the afternoon, directly his master had paid him his wages. By the dim starlight Chumpa could make out the figure of the 'sahib' pacing up and down in front of the bungalow, the end of his cheroot a glowing crimson spot. From Bhagwan, the old bearer, she had learnt that to-morrow the sahib was going away to be married, and that after ten days he would bring home his bride.

That was why the bungalow had been freshly colour-washed and new bamboo furniture put into the drawing-room; and a vague hope rose in Chumpa's mind that he would treat his 'mem-sahib' better than Panchoo treated her. She thought regretfully of her little village home far away at the foot of the Himalayas, where life had been one long, sunny game of play, until Panchoo had married her, and taken her hundreds of miles down country by rail, to an

¹⁴ From the Hindi word *sāīs*, meaning a stableman or groom.

¹⁵ A chupatty, from the Hindi word *chapāṭī*, is a common food in Northern India. It is made from unleavened bread, patted flat by hand and then baked on a griddle.

existence composed of threats, blows, and slavery. How she hated him! Although he wore heavy gold rings in his ears and, being a Kahar by caste, was entitled to be burned, as an orthodox Hindu, after death, and his ashes consigned to the Ganges.

Chumpa, who was only a Chumar¹⁶ by caste, was well aware that she had married above her, but she loathed and feared her husband, and to-night she was dreading his return, for he would assuredly be drunk, and her arms and back were still sore from the last beating he had given her. She heard him presently, stumbling along behind the hedge, shouting a low bazaar ditty, and she trembled so violently that the little pile of cakes she had just gathered up to bake slipped from her grasp, and fell into the blazing fire, where they were scorched to a cinder before she could rescue them.

The next moment Panchoo was standing over her, his turban awry, his oily black hair in disorder, and his blood-shot eyes, large, ugly teeth and gold earrings glistening in the firelight.

'What hast thou done, she-pig?' he cried hoarsely. 'Thou hast an owl's brain and clumsy coolie fingers!'

The child, for she was little more, began to whimper. Panchoo, drunk with filthy bazaar spirit, seized a bamboo stick that lay near, and rained heavy blows on the fragile, shrinking body. Suddenly, a strong hand caught his throat, another wrenched the stick from his grasp, and a mighty kick sent him flying into the middle of a carrot-bed, where he lay still, face downwards.

Chumpa looked up and beheld the sahib.

'He was drunk, I suppose?' said Captain Leroy, expecting the little woman to break into shrill lamentations after the manner of her kind, but she quietly answered, 'Yes, sahib,' and hid her face with her shawl.

'Tell him I'll have him put into jail if he touches you again,' said the young man, and walked back to the house, skirting the plot of ground where the drunken man lay, while Chumpa dissolved into tears of despair.

Matters were now worse than ever. The sahib had interfered on her behalf, and Panchoo would never forgive her. In the morning

¹⁶ Chumar, from the Hindi word *Chamar*, originally referred to a person who works with leather. Found throughout northern India, Chumars also worked in agriculture and as day labourers.

the sahib would go off to his wedding, and then Panchoo would revenge himself on her for the kick.

She crept up to the motionless figure on the carrot-bed, and bent over it fearfully, ready to start away should there be any movement. But Panchoo lay perfectly still, his face buried in the loose mould. She stood up, rejoicing in the helplessness of her tyrant, and resolved to return to her father and brothers at home among the pine trees. Even if Panchoo followed, he could but kill her, which he certainly would do if she remained.

She ran into the mare's box, and by the light of the stable lantern unearthed a few rupees wrapped in a piece of rag. She collected one or two small brass cooking vessels, a few clothes and a blanket, and was in the act of making them into a bundle when she was disturbed by the sudden appearance of old Bhagwan, the bearer, who inquired what she was doing, and why Panchoo was lying on the carrot-bed.

Now Chumpa liked old Bhagwan. He had been kind to her on more than one occasion, so she threw herself on his mercy, and explained the situation. Bhagwan said nothing, but, taking the lantern, he stepped into the carrot-bed to examine Panchoo's condition for himself. Then he called Chumpa, who approached gingerly, and seized her wrist.

'He is dead!' whispered Bhagwan. Chumpa screamed, and he promptly clapped his hand over her mouth.

'Silence! Dost thou desire to bring the sahib out here? Stand still and listen. If the sahib know that Panchoo be dead, he will, after the manner of sahibs, believe himself to blame, and there will be God knows what trouble and disturbance. He must be in his place to-morrow to marry the miss-sahib, for did he not cure his slave Bhagwan of cholera two years ago? which is no small thing to be forgotten when trouble threatens his highness. Therefore, notice of what has happened shall not be given to the police, neither shall the sahib have any knowledge of it. Why should his honour be put to inconvenience by reason of the death of this pig, who doubtless had a big spleen, and would have died at a touch? Moreover, it was thou, Chumpa, his wife, who, desiring his death, didst fail to raise his head, and if a report be made, I will see that there be much worry and trouble for thee, woman!'

Chumpa sank trembling to the ground. She was terrified by Bhagwan's threats of police interference. She was terrified also of

her husband's corpse, and perhaps feared him as much dead as when he had lived, for everyone knows the power of an evil spirit, and if any spirit was evil it would most assuredly be Panchoo's.

'What dost thou wish?' she gasped. 'I will do as thou wilt, only let me depart and protect myself from the—'

Bhagwan pulled her roughly to her feet before she could utter the word.

'There be a heap of bricks covered with weeds and rubbish behind the stables,' he said, 'and we will bury Panchoo beneath it. None will seek him, for he was a down-country man, and had no people here, and the jackals will not be able to dig him out. In an hour or two thou wilt be on thy way to the Dhoon, where none will trouble to follow thee. Hasten, then, before the others return from the bazaar.'

'But,' objected Chumpa, below her breath, 'Panchoo was even a Kahar by caste, and his body should be burned, and go to Mother Ganga, not to the earth as with the low-born ones. Otherwise will his spirit have no rest, but will follow and haunt me, and I shall die a dreadful death. And misfortune will fall upon thee, too, Bhagwan.'

'That may be,' said the old man, grimly. 'Nevertheless, there is the sahib's convenience to be considered above everything, and to take Panchoo's body to the burning ghat at present would make the matter public. Later, if misfortune should come about, then will I make some arrangement.'

But Chumpa still hastened.

'Very well,' said Bhagwan, 'then to-morrow morning, after the sahib had departed, shall the police be told that Chumpa, wife of Panchoo, syce, has murdered her husband. Remember I remain here, I do not accompany the sahib.'

Chumpa grovelled again. Evil spirits might possibly be propitiated, but nothing could save her once she was in the dreaded clutches of the police. The result was that the white patch on the carrot-bed disappeared, and a staggering little group made its way in the dim light to the back of the stables, while the following morning Captain Leroy was informed by his bearer that both Panchoo and his wife had taken French leave.

'The son of a pig has run away, sahib. Doubtless because he had been paid his wages up to date, and also because the Huzoor chastised him for beating his wife. But it is of no matter; I can

appoint my cousin's son as syce, who, though a fool, is honest.'

And greatly to Bhagwan's belief, Leroy, suspecting nothing, acquiesced in the arrangement, and started for his wedding, asking no further questions.

Ten days later, when he returned from his honeymoon, he was too full of happiness, and engrossed with his pretty wife, to notice that a change seemed to have crept over the old bearer, and Mrs Leroy was the first to remark that there was something wrong.

'That old man of yours look half dead,' she observed one afternoon, when they were waiting on the verandah steps for the mare and dogcart to come round.

Leroy glanced quickly at Bhagwan, who was standing near with the carriage rug over his arm.

'What is the matter with you, Bhagwan?' he inquired. 'You look very ill.'

'Huzoor! I have had fever,' replied the old man, salaaming. 'It has been on me since the day of thine honour's departure.'

'Then go to your house and keep quiet, and I will send for the native doctor to-morrow if you are not better. He is very old,' he explained to his wife, as Bhagwan shuffled off muttering to himself, 'and really almost useless, but he's devoted to me, and has been in my service ever since I came out to India. I once pulled him through an attack of cholera, and he has never forgotten it.'

'I should think not,' answered Mrs Leroy, with an admiring glance at her husband.

Then the mare and dogcart appeared, but escorted by a tattered, dishevelled creature who proclaimed himself to be the new syce and Bhagwan's relative, and added that his livery had not yet been ordered.

'Well, we can't take him with us like that,' said Mrs Leroy. 'We can go without a syce, as we shan't be stopping anywhere.'

So they started, syce-less, for their first drive, and after walking the mare over the narrow bridge that crossed a tributary of the river close to their own gate, were soon spinning along the broad, white road pleasantly shaded on either side by tamarind, mango and giant fig trees. On they bowled, through the cavalry lines, past the cemetery with its low mud walls and clusters of irregular monuments, over the level crossing of the railway, and down the grand trunk road, until the sun began to set and it was time to turn homewards.

As they neared the station again, a dog rushed out of a wayside hut and frightened the mare.

'By Jove! She can pull when she likes,' exclaimed Leroy.

Mrs Leroy clutched her husband's arm, for she was a very nervous little person.

'I'm sure she's going to bolt!' she cried. 'Oh! do tell the syce to jump down and go to her head.'

'You know there's no syce,' answered Leroy, between his teeth, for he was holding the mare in with all his strength, and yet the pace was growing faster. His wife paid no heed to his words, for they were rapidly approaching the narrow bridge, and she was beside herself with fear.

'Syce! Syce!' she shrieked, and then, as Leroy lost control over the mare, there came a violent smash against the corner of the stone parapet, and the occupants of the dogcart were hurled from their seats.

The night that followed the accident was one of intense anxiety for Leroy, for, though he himself had escaped comparatively uninjured, his wife was seriously hurt, and lay at the point of death.

'Syce! Syce!' she cried, as she tossed and raved in delirium. 'Stop her! Go to her head!'

Nothing could calm her, nothing bring her to her senses, and old Bhagwan, seated outside the door watching like a dog, heard the oft-repeated cry with horror, and when his master for one moment stepped out into the verandah to cool his throbbing temples in the night air, the old servant fell at Leroy's feet, sobbing and incoherent.

'It is Panchoo who is killing her!' he wailed, beating his forehead on the stone floor. 'It is the dog of an unburned syce. The words of Chumpa were true, but I heeded them not. Keep the mem-sahib alive till the bones are burned and the spirit rests. I did it all for the best, sahib—but for the best—aree! aree!'

Leroy looked at the prostrate figure in dull amazement. He heard little of the words, but Bhagwan's apparently frantic grief touched him.

'We are doing all we can, Bhagwan,' he said wearily, 'but the doctor cannot say if she will live or die.'

The native scrambled to his feet and hurried off into the darkness, and Leroy heard his large, loose shoes clattering towards the stables. He heard them pass the house again about an hour

later, and caught the flash of a lantern leaving the compound. After that he thought no more of Bhagwan until the morning came, and with it the doctor's verdict that his wife would live. He walked out into the dewy compound, full of relief and thankfulness, and shouted for his bearer. Bhagwan should hear the good news at once. But Bhagwan was nowhere to be found.

'He left the compound late last night,' volunteered Bhagwan's kinsman, 'and he carried a bundle. He was angered when I asked whither he was going.'

'I suppose he will turn up soon,' thought Leroy, puzzled.

But two days passed, and Bhagwan did not reappear, and on the third morning his body was found by some boatmen in the river not far from the burning ghat. No one seemed able to throw any light on the affair, not even the priest in charge of the sacred burning-place, who, when questioned, shrugged his shoulders, threw out his palms, and shook his head.

Had he chosen, he might have related how, three nights before, an old Hindu servant, shaking with fever and half crazy with anxiety, had brought him a mysterious bundle of human remains to consecrate and burn, and how when the ashes were being cast on to the swirling bosom of the holy river, the old man had slipped away in the darkness towards the native city, taking the path along the treacherous river bank, with only the feeble light of a lantern to guide his failing sight and faltering steps.

But the priest held his tongue, and fingered in the folds of his ragged loin cloth the price of his silence—a pair of heavy gold rings that had once hung in the ears of one Panchoo, syce, Kahar.



‘IN THE COURT OF CONSCIENCE’

ROBERT FLETCHER, magistrate for the district of Tawah in Upper India, was having an afternoon tub, and as he splashed the water over his broad shoulders he sang loudly, and entirely out of tune.

It has been stated that only when a man is absolutely happy and light-hearted can he sing spontaneously in his bath, and Mrs Fletcher, seated outside in the verandah listening to the noise with which her lord and master conducted his ablutions, remembered the saying and sighed—not because Robert was happy, as his singing would imply, but because she had that on her mind which, she felt convinced, if uttered, would silence his inclination to sing for ever.

She took a letter written on this paper from her pocket, and read it carefully through, her finely-marked eyebrows drawn distressfully together. When she came to the end of it she put it back, and sat looking with a troubled gaze over the scorched garden and dusty vista of flat country beyond. The tall yellow grass in the large, unkept grounds rustled faintly, and the warm scent of sun-baked roses and mango blossom floated on the still afternoon air. The outlook beyond the low mud banks surrounding the garden possessed a dreary, never-ending air of peace. A broad, white road, on which the powdery dust lay ankle-deep, a few isolated trees, the blue-washed walls of the Courts, where Robert Fletcher administered justice, and then miles and miles of flat, treeless, sandy monotony stretching to the horizon.

Tawah was a hideously lonely, neglected little civil station, situated practically in a desert, fifty miles from any railway, and boasting of but five official inhabitants with or without families. Yet Katherine Fletcher, a woman of three-and-twenty, possessing enormous capacities for enjoyment and more than her fare share of good looks, told herself that the place would seem a very paradise were her conscience only at rest. Indeed, at times, when the burden lightened a little, she was blissfully happy, for she adored her husband with all the passionate exaggeration of an emotional nature; and when, presently, he came into the verandah, clean-shaved, wholesome, big, honest, cheery, she forgot her

trouble for the moment and smiled up at him for very admiration.

'Been enjoying the concert?' he inquired, putting a large fore-finger under her chin and looking fondly into her eyes.

She laughed reproachfully.

'Oh! Robert!'

'I do make a row,' he admitted, 'but there's something about a bath that raises a Briton's spirits, and makes him give tongue. By the way, I shall have to go off to-night after dinner. There's been some trouble at a police-station twenty miles out, and if I sleep there to-night, I can see to it all in the morning and be back in time for breakfast.'

'What a nuisance!' she replied, 'but it will be cooler for you going to-night than staying out there all day. I suppose you have told the servants to have your things ready? There's the church bell. I must go and put on my hat.'

The clang, clang of a bell, or the substitute for one, rang out harshly. It was Sunday, and different from most Tawah Sundays in this respect, that the chaplain of the nearest station had come over to hold his quarterly services in the bare, ugly little church.

'I suppose the padre will be here to dinner to-night,' said Fletcher, as his wife reappeared in a large, shady white hat. 'Rather lucky, as I have to go off directly afterwards. You won't feel so lonely, and it will be something of a change for you.'

'I don't particularly want any change,' she answered, smiling at him as she fastened her gloves.

'You're a marvelous woman. I can't think why you haven't gone melancholy mad in this God-forsaken hole of a place. We shall get better stations when I am more senior; but a man can't well howl over his first charge of a district. I really think you ought to go away to the hills later on. I know you fell depressed when you think I am not looking, and there are no women here you can make companions of. You've never been through a hot weather, and you don't realise how trying it can be. This is only the beginning.

'I'm certainly not going away without you,' she answered promptly.

'But I couldn't ask for leave so soon after furlough.'

'Then here I stay. I couldn't leave you.' He looked at her with silent tenderness, and then, with their prayer-books in their hands, the pair walked across the garden into the church compound,

which was only divided from their own domain by a dusty aloe hedge.

The service was of a somewhat primitive order. Music there was none, for the aged harmonium that still blocked a corner of the building had long since been disemboweled by rats. The congregation was scanty, and mostly composed of native Christians with a couple of attendant female missionaries. Everyone sang in his, or her, own particular fashion, the solitary hymn being led by the clergyman himself, and pitched in too high a key. Then came the sermon, and while it was being droned forth the sun sank in a thick yellow haze, and dusk crept into the white-washed interior of the little church with the suddenness pertaining to the East. A musk-rat ran chirruping round the walls, myriads of mosquitoes woke and screamed in one frantic chorus; bats descended from their abodes in the rafters and swooped before the noses of the congregation, while the great, heavy punkah creaked and swayed monotonously, waving the hot air to and fro in blasts that might have emanated from the lower regions.

Katherine Fletcher sat through it all, heedless and impassive. Her mind was occupied with her own difficulty to the exclusion of everything else, for her trouble had leapt into flame afresh on the receipt of the letter in her pocket, and her conscience was causing her the most acute unrest. The thought flitted through her brain that, had she the opportunity, she might become a Roman Catholic to obtain rest and relief through confession, and then a sudden idea struck her. Why should she not tell the chaplain everything, and ask his advice? The prospect made her heart beat with mingled hope and dread; but by the time the service was over she had made her decision, and that night, when dinner was finished and Robert had taken his departure, and she and the Reverend Mr Croppin found themselves sitting alone in the broad, dim verandah, she felt that the hour had come.

She glanced nervously at the chaplain, and a swift revulsion of feeling overcame her. She had not taken the individual into account before. How could she bring herself to lay bare the mental torture of months to such an ordinary, commonplace little specimen of humanity, with a pallid countenance, an uncertain beard, and spectacles? Still, he was a clergyman, she must remember that. She must not consider the man himself any more than if she were consulting a doctor. He must know best what she

ought to do, and, of course, he would respect her confidence. She sat hesitating and silent, listening to the cries of the sleepy birds, the harsh noise made by the crickets, and the rustling of the dry, coarse grass as the night breeze rose off the sand in fitful little gusts.

Mr Croppin had enjoyed his dinner; his chair was comfortable, and iced peg stood on a small table at his elbow; the air in the faintly-lighted verandah was cool after the lamp-heated house, and the mosquitoes had not yet discovered his ankles. He complacently observed the picturesque outline of the figure of his hostess, and wondered why she was so silent.

‘Mr Croppin,’ she said suddenly, now only regarding her companion as a servant of God, and, therefore, the fitting source from whence to seek the advice and comfort she needed so badly.

The chaplain started at the sound of her voice, for its tone portended no ordinary remark.

‘Yes, Mrs Fletcher?’ he replied somewhat anxiously.

‘I—have something of great importance to myself that I want to tell you and ask your advice about as a clergyman.’

‘Certainly,’ said the padre, politely, preparing to give his whole attention.

‘It is a matter of conscience, but I have worried myself over it to such a degree that I cannot see my way clearly at all. It has become distorted and out of proportion.’

‘Surely, if you pray—’

‘Of course I have prayed,’ she interrupted impatiently; ‘but it’s a thing to be talked about with a human being who can answer me. I am past praying over it.’

Mr Croppin fidgeted. He trusted he was not about to have some embarrassing confession thrust upon him. He thought Mrs Fletcher looked decidedly queer. Her face was white and quivering, her eyes shining, her hands gesticulating. Evidently a nervous, hysterical woman, who would be likely to make a mountain out of a mole-hill. For aught he could tell, she might be wrong in her head, or perhaps she drank—and he endeavoured to recollect what she had taken at dinner, while Katherine continued rapidly,—

‘I married my husband under false pretences.’ (Mr Croppin gave himself up for lost.) ‘He thought I loved him, but he was mistaken. I did not love him at all, though I allowed him to think I did, and I have never undeceived him.’

‘Well?’ encouraged Mr Croppin.

‘I had been thrown over—jilted by another man, and I was hard and reckless. I was free to go where I pleased, having money of my own, so I came out to India to escape from the remarks and commiseration that followed me everywhere at home. My husband was returning from furlough and we met on board ship. I was amused and distracted when he fell in love with me, and then I thought perhaps I might do worse than marry him, that, at anyrate, it would show the other man my heart was not broken. But I let Robert think I cared for him, it was very easy—a man takes so much for granted when he is in love—and I understood him well enough to know he would never marry any woman unless he thought she loved him. So I told him nothing of the other man, and I deceived him without a qualm. I liked him, and I wanted peace and quiet and someone I could trust. So I married him.’

‘Well?’ said Mr Croppin again. It seemed to him a great fuss about nothing very dreadful, and he only hoped she was not going to ask his advice as to leaving her husband now she had married him.

‘We were married at Bombay eight months ago, and came straight up here. You know the kind of place it is—lonely, hideous, cut off from the world. At first I thought I should never be able to endure it; but then gradually I discovered how good and unselfish my husband is, how manly and how true-hearted, and I fell in love with him honestly and devotedly. Now I might be so happy and contented, but I scarcely ever know a moment’s peace, for it is always on my conscience that I was not the woman he took me for when he married me. Yesterday I had a letter from that other man—fancy his daring to write to me!’—her hands clenched themselves and her eyes flashed—‘and I had to hide the letter! I could not show it to my husband without explaining everything to him.’

‘I wonder you don’t tell him all about it,’ suggested Mr Croppin.

‘Ah! That is the question I wanted to ask you,’ she answered eagerly. ‘Ought I to tell him? I don’t know what is right. I would give anything to ease the weight of my conscience, to relieve myself of the burden, but I so dread making him miserable! It is agony to me to know how I have deceived him, but if I tell him it may spoil the happiness of his life.’

‘Oh! I don’t suppose it would exactly do that,’ said Mr Croppin

in an incredulous tone. (To himself he added, 'The woman is morbidly hysterical.') 'If you feel that confessing your deception to your husband will ease your conscience, that in itself shows you the proper course to pursue. Never do evil that good may come.'

'But it seems so selfish,' she murmured helplessly.

Mr Croppin rubbed his spectacles with his silk pocket-handkerchief and then finished his peg, while Mrs Fletcher sat silent, in troubled doubt and hesitation. She was about to speak again, when the gong from the guard-room of the court-house boomed out eleven strokes.

'I must be going,' said the chaplain. 'I start so early in the morning that all my things have to be ready over-night. Good-bye, Mrs Fletcher, I trust I have been of service to you. Follow the dictates of your conscience and you cannot go astray'—and Mr Croppin departed, uttering last platitudes of advice and exhortation.

That night was like a hideous dream to Katherine Fletcher. Sleep was impossible, and she tossed restlessly from side to side, half suffocated with the heat. She rose and wandered through the stuffy rooms, disturbing millions of mosquitoes, and then into the verandah, where she stood gazing out into the moonlit garden, a prey to mental indecision and unrest. What would Robert do if she told him? No doubt he would be gentle, kind and considerate, and blame her not at all; but a subtle change must creep in between them, born of the mutual knowledge of her capacities for deception. Their lives might never be the same again. Would it not be braver to hold her peace and suffer in silence? But the chaplain had urged her to obey her conscience, and surely her conscience was clamouring for confession? She recalled the time when Robert had proposed to her, how she had lied with her eyes and lips; how she had kept silent as to her past. Every word they had both said, every silence she had kept, seemed seared into her memory. Of course he would remember it all equally clearly, and he would never believe in her again. Perhaps he would not even believe that she loved him now!

The unhappy woman rocked herself to and fro in a mental agony that was almost physical, though she dimly suspected that she had magnified her iniquity out of all proportion to the facts. Still, the facts were there, nothing could alter them, and she oscillated between the desire to tell her husband all, and the wish to save him pain and disappointment, crying hot tears of bewild-

erment and misery, and pacing the verandah with her slippers on feet, until the watchman paused in his prowling round the house and coughed loudly in surprised expostulation.

The long, silent night gave place to a noisy dawn. Dogs began to bark, servants to yawn and talk, birds to twitter, squirrels and such-like small beasts to rustle in the undergrowths, and Katherine Fletcher sought her bed, worn out body and soul. Faint, sick, miserable, she cowered beneath the sheet, waiting for the moment when Robert should appear and hear the confession that was now almost bursting from her dry lips....

When next she raised her head from the pillow the sun was shining fiercely and it was well on in the morning. How long had she been asleep? Had she had fever? She glanced at the clock and knew that Robert must be in soon. How she dreaded and yet longed for the sound of his voice and the touch of his hand.

There was a crunching of wheels outside. Her heart began to beat wildly—everything seemed changed since he had left her last night—she wanted to hide herself.

‘Robert!’ she cried, with a sob, as the curtain at the door of her room was raised and her husband’s face looked in.

He was dusty, hot, tired and thirsty. He was longing for his bath and his breakfast, also for a cheroot, for he had found himself, by an oversight, minus a smoke on reaching the police-station, and in consequence had suffered as only a smoker can.

Katherine, at any other time, would have been the first to divine and minister to his wants, but now she was almost beside herself. She only knew that Robert had come back, and that she had resolved to reveal her perfidy.

‘Kits!’ he cried, concernedly, striding into the room, ‘are you ill?’

For answer she began to cry weakly. The strain had been so great that now she gave way without a struggle.

‘Darling!’ he said, scared and astonished, ‘what on earth is the matter?’

‘I want to tell you something,’ she sobbed, ‘and when you know I am sure you will never love me again.’

He felt her pulse and her forehead anxiously. ‘I believe you’ve got fever,’ he said.

‘No, no,’ putting her arms round his neck, ‘only I am very miserable.’

Robert sat down on the edge of the bed and took her hands

firmly in his.

'Now try and stop crying,' he said, 'and tell me what is the matter.'

Suddenly the whole affair seemed to sink into comparative insignificance before his calm common sense, and the familiarity of his presence. She ceased crying and wavered.

'Now, Kitty, go on. You have worried yourself into the devil's own fuss about something while I have been away, and I swear I am not going to have my bath, or my breakfast, or even a smoke, until you tell me all about it.'

'I didn't love you when I married you,' she burst out defiantly, and it sounded so inconsequent and out of place that she almost laughed.

'And don't you love me now?' he asked gravely, dropping her hands.

'Love you—love you? I worship you! But I was so wicked and deceitful. I pretended—I let you think—oh! don't you remember—?' and out came the story that she had poured into Mr Croppin's unwilling ears the previous night, but incoherent, disjointed, tearful.

Fletcher listened, walking up and down the room, his hands in his pockets and his head bent. Then he knelt down by his wife's bedside and took her in his arms.

'Poor child,' he said gently, 'how you must have suffered, bottling it up like this for so long. It has got on your nerves, and being in this beastly hole with no nice women to talk to has made it worse.'

'Oh, Robert!' she sobbed, 'you always think of me first! Do you mind dreadfully? Will it make you miserable?'

'My dear, I don't mind anything so long as you love me now. I am glad you told me. Lots of women would have thought nothing of keeping it dark; but you are different from other women, and do you think I don't know it? Kiss me, dearest, and lie down and go to sleep or you will make yourself really ill. You poor eyes look like two burnt holes in a blanket! I must go and wash, I never felt so sticky and hot in my life. Bearer! Bearer!' he shouted over her head, 'Get my bath ready at once.'

He kissed her again, and went out of the room, leaving her weak from emotion, and bewildered, relieved, but yet vaguely disappointed at the manner in which he had taken her news. It

evidently had not struck him as being so terrible as it appeared to her; and she began to wonder if he quite realised all she had been through and the unspeakable disquietude she had suffered. Had he forgotten all her looks and words when she had so deliberately deceived him? Were all the details of their courtship fading from his mind? After all, perhaps, she might just as well have considered herself only, and told him long ago without the dread of spoiling his life. How much bitter heartache it would have saved her!

She could hear him moving about in his dressing-room preparing for his bath. Would he be able to sing as usual while he was having it? She listened anxiously, and presently there came to her ears the sound of splashing water from the other side of the wall, accompanied by a lusty, untuneful voice raised in song.



CHUNIA, AYAH

‘I HOPE you clearly understand that I do not believe in ghosts?’

The little grey-haired spinster paused and regarded me with suspicion, and, alarmed lest I should, after all, lose the story I had been so carefully stalking, I vehemently reassured her on the point, whereupon, to my relief, she continued,—

‘It certainly was a most extraordinary thing, and even now I hardly know what to make of it, though it happened a long time ago. One cold weather when I was in India keeping house for my brother, I received a letter from a friend begging me to pay her a long-promised visit. She wrote that her husband was going into camp for a month to a part of his district where she could not accompany him, so that she and her little girl would be all alone, and I should be doing her a great kindness by coming. So the end of it was I accepted the invitation, though I greatly disliked leaving my brother to the tender mercies of the servants, and after a long, hot journey arrived at my destination at five o’clock one evening.

‘My friend, Mrs Pollok, was on the platform to meet me, and outside the station a bamboo cart was waiting, into which we climbed, and were soon bowling along the hard, white road at a brisk pace. Mary at once began to relate anecdotes of her little girl, whose name was Dot—how tall she was for her age (twenty months!), how much she ate, what she tried to say, what the ayah said about her, and so on.

‘Now I must confess that I am not very fond of children; I like them well enough in their proper place (if that is not too near me), but I do not know how to behave towards them, and am always nervous as to what they will do or say next. Therefore, fond as I was of Mary herself, the subject of her conversation did not particularly interest me. When we arrived at the house, she actually inquired which I would do first—see Dot or have some tea! I boldly elected for tea, as I was exceedingly tired and thirsty, and I also reflected that if I did not at once make a determined stand, I should be Dot-ridden for the remainder of my visit.

‘After tea I was taken to my room, and Mary brought her treasure to me for exhibition. She was the most lovely child I had

ever beheld, with a grave, sweet face that quite won my unmotherly heart, and for once my prejudices completely melted away. Mary put her into my arms and stood by in an ecstasy of pride and delight as I proceeded to tap the pin-cushion, rattle my keys, and perform various idiotic antics in my efforts to amuse Dot, who, I felt sure, would set up a howl in a few moments. But she watched my foolish attempts to be entertaining with an attentive gravity that was quite embarrassing, and charmed though I was with the little creature, I felt relieved when she held out her arms to go back to her mother.

‘Mary called for the ayah to come and take the child to her nursery, and a woman with a sullen, handsome face entered and took her charge away. I remarked that the ayah looked bad-tempered, upon which Mary assured me that she could trust the child anywhere with her, and that she was a perfect treasure.

‘The next morning I was awakened by a soft little pat on my face, and, opening my eyes, I found Dot holding herself upright by the corner of my pillow.

“‘Why, little one, are you all alone?’” I said, lifting her on to the bed, and then I discovered that her feet were dripping with water.

‘She held up one wet little foot and examined it carefully, and then pointed to the bathroom door, which was open, and from where I lay I could see an over-turned jug and streams of water on the floor—evidently Dot’s handiwork. I put on my dressing-gown and took the child to her mother, explaining what had happened, and Mary hastily pulled off the soaking little shoes and socks and called for the ayah, who presently entered, and stood silently watching her mistress.

“‘What do you mean by leaving the child in this way?’” exclaimed Mary, angrily, and gathering up Dot’s shoes and socks, she threw them to the ayah, bidding her bring others that we dry. One of the little shoes struck the woman on the cheek, for Mary was annoyed and had flung them with unnecessary force, and never shall I forget the look on the ayah’s face as she left the room to carry out the order. It was the face of a devil, but Mary did not see it, for she was busy rubbing the cold little feet in her hands.

“‘Mary,” I said impulsively, “I am sure that ayah is a brute. Do get rid of her. I never saw anything so dreadful as the look she gave you just now.”

“‘My dear,” answered Mary, with good-humoured impatience,

“you have taken an unreasonable dislike to Chunia. She knew she was in the wrong and felt ashamed of herself.”

‘So the matter dropped; but I could not get over my dislike of Chunia, and as my visit wore on, and I became more and more attached to dear little Dot, I could hardly endure to see the child in her presence.

‘My month with Mary passed quickly away, and I was really sorry when it was over, more especially as, on my return home, my brother was called away unexpectedly on business, and I was left alone. I missed Dot more than I could have believed possible, for I had become ridiculously devoted to the small, round bundle of humanity, with the great dark eyes and short yellow curls, and my feelings are not to be described when the letter came from Mr Pollok giving me the awful news of the child’s death.

‘I read the letter over and over again, hardly able to believe it. The whole thing was so hideously sudden! I had only left Mary and Dot such a short time ago, and when last I had seen the child she was in her mother’s arms on the platform of the railway station, kissing her little fat hands laboriously to me in farewell, and looking the picture of life and health.

‘Poor Mr Pollok wrote in a heart-broken strain. It appeared that the child had strayed away one afternoon and must have fallen into the river, which ran past the bottom of the garden, for the little sun-hat was found floating in the stream, and close to the water’s edge lay a toy that she had been playing with all day. Every search had been made, but no further trace could be found. The poor mother was distracted with sorrow, and Mr Pollok had telegraphed for leave, as he meant to take her to England at once. He added that the ayah, Chunia, had been absent on three days’ leave when the dreadful accident happened, or, they both felt convinced, it would never have occurred at all. Mary, he wrote, sent me a message to beg me to take the woman into my service, as she could not endure the idea of one who had been so much with their darling going to strangers, for the poor woman had been a faithful servant, and was stricken and dumb with grief.

‘I telegraphed at once that I would take Chunia willingly. I forgot my old antipathy to her, and only remembered that I should have someone about me who had known and loved the child so well. When the woman arrived I was quite shocked at her altered appearance. Her face seemed to have shrunk to half its former size,

and her eyes looked enormous, and shone with a strange brilliancy. She was very quiet at first, but burst into a flood of tears when I tried to speak to her of poor little Dot, so I gave it up, as I saw she could hardly bear the subject mentioned.

"She helped me to undress the first night, and then, instead of leaving the room, she stood looking at me without speaking.

"What is it?" I inquired.

"Mem-sahib," she said in a whisper, glancing over her shoulder, "may I sleep in your dressing-room to-night?"

"I willingly gave her permission, for I saw that the woman's nerves were unstrung and that she needed companionship. Then I got into bed, and must have been asleep for some hours when I awoke thinking I had heard a shrill voice crying in the compound. I listened, and again it came, a high, beseeching wail. It was certainly the voice of a child, and the awful pleading and despair expressed in the sound was heart-rending. I felt sure some native baby had wandered into the grounds and was calling hopelessly for its mother.

"I lit a candle and went into my dressing-room, where, to my astonishment, I saw Chunia crouching against the outer door that led into the verandah, holding it fast with both hands as though she were shutting someone out.

"I asked what she was doing, and whether she knew whose child was crying outside. She sprang to her feet and answered sullenly that she had heard no child crying. I opened the door and went out into the verandah, but nothing was to be seen or heard, and I had no reply to my shouts of inquiry; so, concluding that it must have been my fancy, or perhaps some prowling animal, I returned to bed, and slept soundly for the rest of the night.

"The next evening I dined out, and on my return was surprised to hear someone talking in my dressing-room. I hurried in, and again found Chunia kneeling in front of the outer door imploring somebody to 'go away' at the top of her voice. Directly she saw me she came towards me excitedly.

"Oh! mem-sahib!" she shrieked, "tell her to go away!"

"Tell who?" I demanded.

"Dottie-babba," she wailed, wringing her hands. "She cries to come to me—listen to her—listen!"

"She held her breath and waited, and I solemnly declare that as I stood and listened with her, I heard a child crying and moaning on

the other side of the door. I was mute with horror and bewilderment, while the plaintive cry rose and fell, and then, flinging the door open, I held the candle high above my head. There was no need of a light, for the moon was full, but no child could I see, and the verandah was quite empty. I determined to sift the matter to the bottom, so I went to the servants' quarters and called them all up. But no one could account for the crying of a child, and though the compound was thoroughly searched nothing was discovered. So the servants returned to their houses and I to my verandah, where I found Chunia in a most excited state.

"Mem-sahib," she said, with her fists clenched and her eyes starting out of her head, "will she go away if I tell you all about it?"

"Yes, yes," I cried soothingly, "tell me what you like."

She silently took my wrist and dragged me into the dressing-room, shutting the door with the utmost caution.

"Stand with your back against it," she whispered, "so that she cannot enter."

I feared I was in the presence of a mad woman, so I did as she bade me, and waited quietly for her story. She walked up and down the room and began to speak in a kind of chant.

"I did it," she sang. "I killed the child, little Dottie-babba, and she has followed me always. You heard her cry to-night and last night. The mem-sahib angered me the day she struck me with the shoe, and then a devil entered into my heart. I asked for leave, and went away, but it was too strong, it drew me back, and it said kill! kill! I fought and struggled against the voice, but it was useless. So on the second day of my leave I crept back and hid among the bushes till I saw the child alone, and then I took her away and killed her. She was so glad to see me, and laughed and talked, but when she saw the devil in my eyes she grew frightened, and cried just as you heard her cry to-night. I took her little white neck in my hands—see, mem-sahib, how large and strong my hands are—and I pressed and pressed until the child was dead, and then the devil left me. I looked and saw what I had done. I could not unclasp her fingers from my skirt, they clung so tightly, so I took it off and wrapped her in it—"

The woman stopped suddenly. I had listened in silence, repressing the exclamations of horror that rose to my lips.

"What did you do then?" I asked.

'Chunia looked wildly round.

"I forget," she murmured; "the river, I ran quickly to the river—"

"Then there came a shriek from her dry, parched lips, and flinging her arms above her head she fell at my feet unconscious and foaming at the mouth.

'Afterwards Chunia was found to be raving mad, and the doctor expressed his opinion that she must have been in a more or less dangerous state for some months past. I told him of her horrible confession to me, but he said that possibly the whole thing was a delusion on her part.

'I went to see her once after she had been placed under restraint, but the sight was so saddening that I never went again. She was seated on the floor of her prison patting an imaginary baby to sleep, croning the quaint little lullaby that ayahs always use, and when I spoke to her she only gazed at me with dull, vacant eyes, and continued the monotonous chant as though she had not seen me at all.'

• • • • •

'And the child you heard crying?' I ventured to ask.

'Oh! How can I tell what it was? I don't know,' she answered with impatient perplexity. 'I can't believe that it was the spirit of little Dot, and yet—and yet—what was it?'



THE BISCOBRA

THEY were truly a dismal-looking group when they got out of the train, and stood shivering and sleepy on the dusty platform of the little railway station one raw, cold-weather's morning—young Krey, his still younger wife, and a few draggled servants in dirty white clothing and tumbled puggaries.¹⁷

Young Krey had landed in India three months before, a newly-fledged Bengal civilian, with narrow, stooping shoulders, deep-set, intelligent eyes shining through powerful spectacles, a bald, bumpy forehead—and a wife!

Now, for a youngster to commence his official existence as a married man is an unpardonable piece of stupidity in the eyes of the Indian authorities. To marry at the outset of his career is to write himself down an ass, and he usually suffers accordingly for his folly. A bachelor can always be taken in at once by his superior official, housed, fed, schooled in the manners and customs of the country, pitied for his home-sickness by the female members of his host's family, and often has an uncommonly good time of it during the first few months of his service. But when there is a wife to be considered the aspect of affairs changes entirely. Married couples cannot always be 'put up' at a moment's notice; the lady may have an inconsiderate habit of falling ill in other people's houses, or a tendency to stay in them longer than she is wanted, she may be exasperatingly helpless, or hopelessly bumptious, and also, a man alone is seldom any trouble, whereas a lady has more or less to be 'entertained.'

So the Kreys, on their arrival at headquarters, found themselves pondering vaguely over all they had heard concerning the proverbial hospitality of Anglo-Indians, in a dirty, ill-kept hotel, the horrors of which they patiently endured for the space of ten days. Then came the taking of a huge barrack of a house at a fabulous rent, and impossible to make comfortable, but the only dwelling available at the time, and after being cheated right and left over the matting, floor-cloth and furniture, having unpacked their wedding

¹⁷ From the Hindi word *pagri*, meaning "a turban."

presents, cut the curtains to fit the doors, and more or less settled down, there came orders for a transfer to a small station—the outcome of which was the afore-mentioned doleful group on the platform of the bare little railway station.

The Kreys had arrived at their new destination cold, tired and miserable, and the drive that followed to the dâk bungalow in a shaky hired vehicle was not calculated to raise the spirits of the young couple. First they passed an evil-smelling village tank, almost covered with thick green slime, in which buffaloes wallowed and dirty clothes were being soused. Then came the post-office, an ugly little red brick edifice with iron bars in front of the windows, and the postmaster seated outside on a string bedstead, wrapped in a quilt of many colours, warming himself in the misty morning sunshine. Then a bare length of road devoid of trees, bounded by crops on either side, and dotted with cattle being driven to the jungle to graze. Then, rising conspicuously from the surrounding flatness, a large fig tree with thick, whispering leaves which shaded a tiny temple containing a strange, many-limbed idol smeared with red paint, that made Mrs Krey think of blood, and the Mutiny, and hideous tales of human sacrifice.

A few European dwellings followed, and at last came the dâk bungalow, a severe little blue-washed building standing in a dusty area of bare ground, with the usual accessories of long-legged fowls, expectant crows, bearded khansamah, uncompromising furniture, and stuffy rooms filled with mosquitoes.

‘I’m afraid we must stay here till we’ve got a house,’ said young Krey, peering through his spectacles at the uninviting surroundings, ‘but it’s beastly uncomfortable. I’m so sorry, Nell!’

‘What does it matter?’ answered Mrs Krey, cheerfully, diving into her travelling bag. ‘I shall be all right. Don’t get depressed, Frank.’

Nevertheless, though she spoke brightly enough, she was feeling very low and weary. She was not in the best possible health, and had been packing hard for the last week, but she was a brave little person in spite of her fragile appearance and pathetic blue eyes, and her very pluck and patience often caused Krey to blame himself bitterly for having brought her with him to a country where discomfort was rife for the uninitiated, and the so-called luxuries no more than mere necessities.

Just now she longed to indulge in a good cry, but she refrained

heroically because she would bear anything rather than call up that look of remorse and self-condemnation in her husband's boyish face. All she wanted, she said, was rest. So Frank helped her to take off her things, and tenderly drew the dusty shoes from the aching little feet, while he tried to speak in hopeful accents of the station. He felt sure his father had been judge there in bygone days, for he recollected hearing the governor speak of the place. If so, it would be a link, and perhaps some of the natives might remember, which would be a good beginning. He arranged the bed for her, brought her a cup of tea, and then left her to enjoy the rest she needed so badly.

She felt much more cheerful a few days later, when they had taken the only suitable house in the station, though it was an old bungalow and had not been occupied very lately. The thatched roof needed renewing, the walls, seemed to be composed of mud and white ants, and nails driven into them disappeared and were no more seen. Wasps had made their dwellings in corners, and sparrows had built in the fireplaces, owls of all sizes lived in a state of sleepy serenity along the beams of the verandah, and mysterious creatures ran to and fro with sharp, pattering feet over the loose, discoloured ceiling cloths.

All this was a trial to Mrs Krey, but it gave her plenty to do and think of, and she waged untiring war against these unwelcome occupants of her house, for she dreaded and hated 'animals,' as she called owls, ants, rats, spiders, snakes, or anything else she was afraid of. She always looked under her chair before she sat down, peered with a lamp into every nook and corner before she got into bed, and was continually on the watch for insect, reptile, bird or beast.

However, better times were not long in coming. The Kreys settled down, and were exceedingly happy in their rather dilapidated abode. He had enough work to keep him busy, but not too much to prevent his being home from office every evening in time to take his wife for a drive and a visit to the dingy little club. There were two other ladies in the station, who were kind to Mrs Krey, gave her good advice, and helped to make the time pass pleasantly. Everybody liked her and admired her delicate, girlish face and gentle manner, even including the crusty bachelor Collector, who quite fell in love with her, and poured the whole of his family history into her sympathetic ears.

But in spite of all her popularity there was no one in the place who was so absolutely devoted to Mrs Krey as old Beni, the aged Hindu bearer. He was the real ruler of the Krey household, for he had been bearer to young Krey's father before him. He journeyed many miles from the village of his ancestors to discover whether this new sahib was the son of his old master, and having satisfied himself that such was the case, he had calmly attached himself to the young couple, and taken them under his special protection.

The morning that Beni first put in an appearance was one to be remembered. He arrived on a diminutive chestnut pony with a foal running at its heels, and his bedding tied across its back, on the summit of which Beni balanced himself, holding a stick threateningly aloft with one hand, and clinging to the bundle of quilts with the other.

He demanded audience of the sahib, obtained an interview, explained his errand, and displayed a testimonial of his merits as a bearer written by young Krey's father, together with a faded photograph of the judge's wife in a crinoline, with a child on her knee, who, Beni asserted, was Frank himself!

Krey sought his wife's room to tell her the news.

'Such a queer old beggar, Nell,' he concluded. 'He must be at least a hundred. Do come and see him. He says I shall never do such good work as my father, but that all the same he means to stay with us. He looks much too old to work, but, I suppose, we can't refuse to keep him.'

Mrs Krey's politeness was somewhat severely tried when she saw the old man. He looked like a mummified monkey, with his wrinkled brown skin, sunken black eyes and wizened features. He gazed at her intently, and then, to her infinite embarrassment, stooped and touched the toe of her little shoe, calling loudly on his gods to bless her and the unborn grandchild of his old master.

'Frank, he is dreadful; we can't keep him!' she said when this trying interview was over. Nevertheless, the Kreys did keep the old bearer, for he absolutely refused to go, and at once constituted himself the 'mem-sahib's' guide, philosopher and friend. He initiated her into the mysteries of the true bazaar prices, took possession of the key of the store-room, because she left it lying about and there was no knowing who might not profit by such carelessness; he saw the horses groomed and fed, kept an eye on the fowls and took care that none of the eggs were stolen, rated the

other servants when necessary, and was the terror of the compound. On the other hand, he was a god-send to Mrs Krey, as she was soon obliged to admit.

'I can't think what I should do without him,' she confessed to her husband a month later. 'He's wonderfully good, and I have learnt no end of Hindustani from him. But sometimes he's very trying, Frank! He seems to think I'm a perfect child, and hardly ever leaves me by myself. All the time you are at office he sits just outside the drawing-room door, and comes in now and then to see if I am all right. It's really very humiliating, and then' (with a pink blush rising in her cheeks) 'he does say such awful things. He asked me only this morning if I had ordered a cot yet! What would mother say if she knew? I call this a shameless country!'

Frank said that the old man meant well, and she must remember that natives were not distinguished for delicacy of feeling. Gradually Mrs Krey became accustomed to Beni's plain speaking, and often found his advice more useful than she would own even to herself. He purchased an excellent cow on her behalf, and was a dragon over its food and management. He wrote to a friend in Madras and secured a first-rate ayah, who was well-mannered and experienced, and saved her new mistress much trouble and fatigue. For, as time went on and the weather grew hot, Mrs Krey became more easily tired and less inclined to exert herself. She had never been very strong, her nerves were shaky, she was unconsciously home-sick, and also frightened at the thought of the new experience that was to come to her in less than a couple of months.

And just then, to crown it all, the Collector suddenly sent for her husband to join him in camp for a week, and the night before he was to leave she was feeling more foolish and nervous than ever as they sat outside in the garden after dinner,—she on a low couch, with a soft shawl over her shoulders and the bright moonlight sharpening her delicate features till her face looked almost ethereal.

'I wish you hadn't to go, Frank,' she sighed.

'So do I, Nell,' he answered fervently, 'and I'm afraid this is only the forerunner of other separations. You will have to go to the hills this year, I expect—at anyrate, for the rains.'

Krey was young, and it did not occur to him that in giving utterance to his own forebodings he was causing his wife's spirits to sink lower still.

'No, no,' she said hastily, 'don't talk about it. I couldn't go away alone. What should I do without you? What would you do without me?'

She put out a white slender hand towards him, and he clasped it in both of his, shivering slightly.

'The evenings are still chilly,' he said, glancing uneasily round. 'Are you cold, darling?'

'No, not cold,' in a weary, depressed voice, 'only miserable. I can't bear the thought of your going to-morrow. I feel as if something dreadful were going to happen. Frank, tell me, do you ever realise that some day a time will come when one of us will be left alone? When either you or I will have to face life with nothing in the way of comfort, but just recollections. Oh, Frank,' clinging to his hand, with a stifled sob, 'which of us will it be?'

'Hush, Nell, hush, my dearest,' stroking her soft hair with anxious tenderness, 'don't go on like this. For God's sake, don't, darling, you'll make yourself ill. Do promise not to fret while I'm away. The time will soon pass.'

He sat puzzled and wretched, for Nell was crying hysterically, and he was at his wits' end to know how to comfort her.

Then, seeing the gloomy, despondent looks on his face, she choked back her tears and smiled at him.

'I'm all right now,' she said tremulously. 'I don't know what was the matter with me.'

She raised herself from the couch, put her arms round his neck, and they kissed each other passionately.

There was a short silence, broken by a noise in the verandah.

'What in the world is Beni doing?' ejaculated Krey, in astonishment.

The old bearer was mounted on an inverted packing case, poking violently up into the thatch with a long bamboo, while another servant brandished a lantern tied to the end of a stick.

'What is it, Beni?' shouted Krey.

'Sahib, it is a biscobra,'¹⁸ with another lunge into the thatch. 'It is an evil beast, and its sting is more deadly than even the bite of the karait or cobra.'

¹⁸ Common throughout South Asia, these lizards are also known as Bengal monitors or Indian monitors. Natives of western India refer to the lizards as *bis-cobras*, while they are known as *goshaap* in West Bengal.

THE BISCOBRA

‘Oh! What is a biscobra?’ cried Mrs Krey, half rising, and turning pale with horror. Here was a new ‘animal’ that she had never even heard of, and in their own verandah roof, too!

‘They are only big lizards,’ said her husband, reassuringly. ‘I read a description of them somewhere the other day. Natives are awfully afraid of them because they are so uncanny-looking, and have a head like a snake’s, but I believe they are perfectly harmless. Leave it alone, Beni,’ he called, ‘you can’t get at it to-night.’

Beni reluctantly scrambled from his rickety perch, and approached his master and mistress describing the evil qualities of a biscobra with so much vehemence that Mrs Krey refused to go to bed till it was killed.

‘But it is only a lizard, and quite harmless. We can’t kill it to-night, Nell, dear; we should never see it.’

So she unwillingly agreed to leave the creature in peace for the night, but would not cross the verandah till the lantern was held before her to guide her over the dark shadows.

‘It might have fallen down,’ she said, advancing with cautious steps and peering nervously about.

The light of the lantern flickered up into the rafters, disturbing a family of bats that swooped irritably down and out into the darkness, while some little owls chattered and objected and cuddled together indignantly on their beam.

‘What was that noise?’ whispered Mrs Krey, clutching her husband’s arm.

There was a slight scratching sound directly overhead, as of claws clinging to woodwork, a faint hiss, and the next moment flapping and turning in the air, the green, scaly body of a large biscobra fell heavily on to Mrs Krey’s shoulder, where it hung for one hideous second, and then dropped with a thud on to the stone verandah floor.

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That night death came to the little thatched bungalow and carried away the happiness of young Krey’s life, leaving him only a wailing scrap of humanity that he turned from with loathing when it was brought to him. The time had come only too swiftly and surely when one of them was left alone; when one of them was forced to face life with nothing but memories for comfort.

People in the station were very kind to him. The motherly-hearted doctor's wife forced him to eat and drink. Wrote letters home for him, and put away his wife's clothes that the sight of them might not harrow him at every turn. She also took charge of the weakly little baby, doing all that her experience knew to keep the faint flame of life alight. And Beni did everything in his power to help her, poor old Beni, who was in despair over the 'mem-sahib's' death, but who found consolation in the child. Then, when the feeble, premature little life died out, his grief was pitiable to see. He closely followed the tiny coffin to the grave in which the young mother had been laid but a few days previously; he stayed in the cemetery for hours, and finally sought out his master, and proffered a piteous, humble request.

'Sahib,' he wailed, 'I cannot leave the mem-sahib and the babba. I am an old man, my time is short, and I would stay with them while I am on earth. Speak to the Collector sahib and get me made caretaker of the cemetery. I do not want wages. I only wish to be with them.'

So when Krey left the station, transferred by his own desire to the other end of the province, old Beni remained behind and tended the little cemetery. Every morning he laid scented jessamine or sacred marigolds on the newly-made mound, and every evening he sat beside it and talked, or crooned songs, to the beloved 'mem-sahib' and 'babba' that lay beneath.

Shortly afterwards a marble cross arrived, which, under Beni's supervision, was erected at once. It did not occur to anyone to interfere, and Beni did not know that it was put up too soon, and that, when the ground became sodden and loose with the rains, it would lean over to one side, or perhaps fall down altogether.

However, for the present, it reared itself in all its white purity amongst the stained and time-worn tombstones, and was kept fresh and clean by the old bearer's tender, untiring care.

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On the anniversary of his wife's death Krey came once more to the station. At first glance it would have been hard to recognise him as the same man, for his health had broken down, his nerves were shattered, and he looked ten years older than his age. Sleep was now a rare visitor to him, and his eyes held a strange, restless

gleam. He had just been ordered home on medical certificate, but Krey could not leave the country without saying good-bye to Nell and the baby; so, telling no one of his intention, he arrived at the dâk bungalow late one close, stuffy evening. The atmosphere of the little building was terribly oppressive. The narrow, ill-ventilated rooms were crowded with bitter memories. Sleep, he well knew, was not to be expected, and so, instead of waiting till the following morning, he started on his solitary walk to the cemetery in the vivid moonlight shortly after midnight.

The air was warm and heavy as he entered the gates of the graveyard, the silence being broken only now and again by the cries of the jackals or the shrill scream of a cricket in one of the mango trees. He walked up the dry, dusty path and then stopped, searching for the cross he had chosen. The moonlight sharpened the edges of the irregular groups of stones and monuments, some of which were crumbling away into mere ruins, and deepened the shadows of the trees and shrubs that bordered the path. He spied a corner of the white cross, and strode rapidly towards it, picking his way amongst the quiet graves.

On reaching the spot he saw that the cross was leaning down to one side, and that a gaping hole had formed in the ground at its base. A sudden rage seized him. Where was Beni, who had pretended to be so faithful and who had promised to tend the grave? What had the Collector and the doctor's wife been about to allow this to happen? He made his way swiftly towards a grass hut at the further end of the cemetery, but as he came alongside the miserable little dwelling, a sound of moaning from within made him pause to listen.

He stooped and looked into the shed, which held a low bedstead, a guttering oil lamp, a few cooking vessels and a hookah. On the bed, beneath a coarse brown blanket, lay Beni, shaking and groaning in the last stage of fever. His bloodshot eyes were vacant and staring, but as they fell on his master recognition flashed into them, and he struggled to raise himself.

'Sahib,' he whispered hoarsely, 'now have my prayers been answered, for thou hast come, now can I speak and tell thee what I feared I should say to no man, for I am going quickly.'

'Beni, why did you not let me know you were ill?' cried Krey, in sore distress, his anger gone as he saw that the old man's moments were numbered.

'How could I, sahib?' Sickness came upon me, and none visit the cemetery save when a sahib dies. So I have lain and waited, for surely I knew that I could not die without seeing thy face once more—' He ceased abruptly, and his head sank.

'Beni?' said Krey.

He thought the end had come, but presently the bleared old eyes opened again.

'The babba,' came in a faint whisper; 'who will feed her?'

'Yes, yes, it will be all right,' said Krey, thinking his mind was wandering.

'She was not fed last night, nor the night before. I could not go to her. She will be watching for me. Sahib, go and feed her. The goat is tethered to a tree outside, and the vessel for the milk lies on the floor.' Beni paused for a moment to get his breath, then he said impatiently, 'Go, sahib, go quickly.'

'Yes,' answered Krey again.

'Thou thinkest I lie?' cried the old man, with sudden energy. 'I speak but the truth. Every night had the babba left the grave and I have fed her with goat's milk. I bought the goat with my own savings. Thou believest me not!' he continued with angry despair. 'Come, then, and I will show thee! Nay, I will rise. I have enough life left to go forth once more and feed the babba, but it will be for the last time.'

Krey could not prevent his carrying out his purpose, and the old man rose slowly and painfully from the bed, tottering and shaking. Together they unfastened the goat, and with Krey carrying the brass 'lota' for the milk, they slowly wended their way towards the marble cross, Beni hanging helplessly on to the arm of the young man, while the goat followed bleating anxiously.

When they reached the grave Beni sat down on the ground exhausted. Krey stood by him in silence. He felt as if he were dreaming, and a vague horror oppressed him. Gradually the old man revived, and with an almost superhuman effort called the goat to him and milked her into the 'lota.' Then he crawled to the gap under the cross, set the vessel down at the edge of the fissure, and made a chirruping sound with his lips.

'Now, sahib,' he said, turning to Krey, who waited in silence.

Two or three seconds passed. The moon glittered on brilliantly, a fox barked in a neighbouring field, an owl hooted and flew from one tree to another with a melancholy flap-flap of its wings—and

THE BISCOBRA

then came a scrambling inside the hole. Krey leant forward and held his breath, and saw a large biscobra slowly emerge from the crack in the ground and begin to lap the milk.

A cry of horror, rage and madness escaped his dry lips. He made a dash at the creature's snake-like head with his stick, and beat it to a pulp with all his strength.

Another cry rose on the night air.

'Sahib! Sahib! What hast thou done? Thou hast slain the soul of the child—thou hast—' A rattle in the old man's throat choked his utterance, and he fell forward on his face.

The next morning a half-caste clerk and his wife came to lay a painted metal wreath on the grave of a relative, and they found Beni's lifeless body lying by the crooked white cross. Near at hand was an overturned brass vessel and a dead biscobra with its head beaten off, and wandering about the cemetery was an Englishman, who laughed and danced foolishly when they spoke to him, and from whose eyes the light of understanding had gone for ever.

THE END



Appendix A - Literary and Biographical Contexts

Obituary from *The Times* (February 15, 1934), p. 9.

MRS. ALICE PERRIN

Indian Life and Character

We regret to announce that Mrs. Alice Perrin died at Vevey, Switzerland, on Tuesday.

For many years she delighted her countrymen and women with her novels of Indian and British-Indian life, and she instructed them also. For she was steeped in the political and social history of the English in India, and to that foundation she added an intimate knowledge of their daily life, their troubles, and their joys. Her books are in fact a valuable contribution to an understanding of modern Indian history. Times have changed outwardly at least; but in essentials Mrs. Perrin's types are the same to-day as when she created them, as all who know anything of British-Indian life will agree; and those who do not can still learn more from her novels than from most political and polemical writings.

Alice Robinson came of old "John Company" stock. She was the daughter of the late General John Innes Robinson, of the Bengal Cavalry, and a sister of Sir Douglas Robinson, sixth baronet, and was born in 1867. She married, in 1886, the late Mr. Charles Perrin, M.I.C.E., formerly of the Indian Public Works Department, and later of the London Water Board and the Ministry of Health, who died in 1931. In her wanderings with her husband she acquired her intimate knowledge of the life of British residents in India of all classes, from those in "the seats of the mighty to the humblest."

Her first book, "East of Suez," which appeared in 1901, attracted much attention, and thenceforth a succession of stories established her reputation with an increasing number of readers. In "Idolatry" (1909) she broke ground usually avoided by the novelist—namely, that occupied by the missionaries, whom she treats with shrewdness and understanding. "The Charm" (1910) shows the tragedy of the marriage of a young Civil servant with an Anglo-Indian widow. "The Happy Hunting Ground" (1914) is occupied,

as its title implies, with the girls who go (or used to go) to India to find husbands. "The Anglo-Indians," 1912 (to-day it would be called "The British-Indians"), is the story, not unknown in real life, of a distinguished administrator who, after the spleen-dour of a great Indian career, retires to die of cold and boredom in a London suburb. She published nothing after "Rough Passages" in 1926 until "Other Sheep" appeared in 1932, which showed that her powers as a writer were no whit diminished. It is an unforgettable picture of the material trials borne by the white missionaries in India.

Mrs. Perrin was a realist, and all her work bears the stamp of sincerity and love of truth which characterized her as an individual. She wrote a simple, unforced style, and the reader feels keenly the heat, the dust, the moonrise, the night calls, and all the sights and sounds and smells of the unchanging East. To the great regret of their many friends, Mrs. Perrin and her husband went to live in Switzerland nine or 10 years ago, and had since returned only for rare visits. She was tall and handsome with an exuberant sense of humour and a gift of conversation which made her the best of good company. She was an excellent literary critic, and a most generous and large-hearted admirer of many authors whose merits she had been among the first to discern. With a high sense of duty she combined a courage which carried her through private sorrows of no ordinary kind, and she leaves an inspiring memory in the hearts of all those, in every station of life, who regarded her with deep affection.

She is to be buried at Vevey by the side of her husband.

Obituary from *The Times* (May 5, 1931), p. 19.

MR. CHARLES PERRIN

Mr. Charles Perrin, formerly of the Indian Public Works Department and later of the Ministry of Health, London, died at Tour de Peilz, Vaud, Switzerland, on Saturday, in his seventy-eighth year.

A son of James Dudden Perrin, of Templecombe, Somerset, he entered the Indian P.W.D. in 1874, and was employed on irrigation works in the United Provinces—then known as the North West

Provinces and Oudh. He reached the grade of executive engineer in 1883, and in 1892 was appointed Under-Secretary to the local Government. In the following year he was made Sanitary Engineer for the Province, with the rank of superintending engineer. These appointments meant much travel on inspection duty.

He had married in 1886 a lady a good many years his junior, Alice, daughter of General John Innes Robinson, Bengal Cavalry. In these wanderings with her husband she acquired that intimate knowledge of the life of British residents in India and of the Indians with whom they are mostly brought into contact which has made her many novels of the past 30 years an important contribution to an understanding of the Indian history of our time. Husband and wife shared a kindly and discriminating outlook on India and an abiding fascination by the manifold problems it presents. For two years from 1896 Perrin superintended the practical training of passed students at the Royal Indian Engineering College at Coopers Hill. He retired from the Indian service in 1899, and subsequently took up an appointment under the Local Government Board (now the Ministry of Health) in connexion with the London water supply. During the Great War his duties became naturally even more responsible. In the last few years Mr. and Mrs. Perrin have lived in Switzerland at Tour de Peilz, Vaud.

Obituary from *The Times* (December, 23, 1924), p. 12.

SIR E.W. ROBINSON.

Sir Ernest William Robinson, Bt., died on Sunday night at Jersey, where he had been staying. He had been ill for some time from a heart affection. Born on May 22, 1862, he was the son of Major-General John Innes Robinson, Indian Staff Corps, brother of the fourth baronet, whom he succeeded in 1985. The first baronet was chairman of the Honourable East India Company; the second was chief superintendent of British trade in China, the third was a major in the 22nd Regiment, and the fourth was in the Bengal Civil Service. Sir Ernest had lived much in India and was very fond of sport. He married in 1897 Christina Eleanor, daughter of Major Grant, of Rothies; she died in 1916 leaving one daughter; and he married secondly in 1920 Hannah, widow of Colonel

Gordon Watson. The heir to the title is Sir Ernest's next brother, Mr. Douglas Innes Robinson, who married his cousin Violet, daughter of the late Charles Herbert Ames. Sir Ernest leaves a sister, Mrs. Alice Perrin, the author of "The Stronger Claim," "The Anglo-Indians," and other well-known novels.

From *The Times* (June 18, 1912), p. 10.

THE WOMEN-WRITERS' DINNER.

The 23rd annual dinner held last night at the Criterion Restaurant by the members of the Writers' Club (among the hostesses being Mrs. Baillie Reynolds, Mrs. W.K. Clifford, and Mrs. Woods) was notable for being chiefly Anglo-Indian in its character and interests. Mrs Perrin, the writer on India who was in the chair, paid a tribute to the service that novelists have rendered in bridging the distance between East and West.

Mrs. Lowndes spoke of the various writers who have made India their central problem, mentioning Mrs. Croker and Mrs. Everard Cotes, Mrs. Luck (M. Hamilton), Mrs. Penny, Miss Patricia Wentworth, Lady Wilson, Mrs. Diver, Mrs. Hobart Hampden, and Mrs. Kenneth Combe, giving due honour to Mrs. Perrin for her collection of Anglo-Indian stories.

Mrs. W.L. Courtney made an amusing speech on the idiosyncrasies of the public, and Mrs. Steel spoke of the question woman versus man, quoting a saying of an Eastern poet of the 11th century—"Lo, we are thieves of life and sanctuaries of souls."

Excerpt from 'Books to Buy and Ask For', *The Times* (August 1, 1922), p. 13.

Mrs. Perrin's New Story.

Among the books which the Queen took with her on their Majesties' memorable visit to India was a complete set of Alice Perrin's novels. Few Englishwomen, even among the thousands who have lived there since the days of the old Company, can speak with such knowledge and authority of the Anglo-Indian world.

Messrs. Methuen will shortly publish her new novel, "The Mound." The central figure in the story is that of an Englishman who unexpectedly inherits a stretch of isolated country in India. He goes out there to find that the most interesting object on his property is a strange shapeless ruin, which had once been a splendid memorial to Buddha, and which is locally believed to contain relics of the Great Teacher. The part played by The Mound in the man's life and the way in which he is unconsciously influenced by it form the genesis of the story.

From *The Future of the Novel: Famous Authors on Their Methods*, conducted by Meredith Starr (Boston: Maynard & Company, 1921).

ALICE PERRIN

"Who could venture to prophesy about anything unless gifted with second-sight, which, from the police reports, would appear sometimes to be a more or less dangerous attribute?" said Mrs. Perrin.

"But as I am not at the moment gazing into a crystal or examining the lines on some prominent publisher's hands, I may perhaps, with safety, declare that only with the end of the world will come the end of the novel; and even then, possibly we may hope to find it, devoid of all connection with filthy lucre, in the realms described to us by the Rev. Vale Owen.

"Of course eight or nine shillings seems an appalling price to pay for a work of imagination that may have cost the writer a year, or may be years, of hard work; and what it has cost the publisher he and Heaven alone can say,—and sometimes he says it has cost him a vast deal more than he has bestowed upon the author who has written it.

"But (unfortunately for me) I can well remember that period of the 'three decker' novel, which, though of no greater length than present day works of fiction, cost over thirty shillings, and even then library subscriptions were not so very much higher than they are now, when there are so many more libraries. Also, the chances for 'first novels' seem to stand higher, considering the 'hundreds of pounds' of prizes offered by various publishing houses for the article.

"But publishers, I suppose, must live, and so, presumably, must

authors, so if novels are to become extinct we may perhaps look for a simultaneous demise of the two; but more likely the author would expire first, for I have never yet heard a publisher acknowledge that he depends solely on his business to keep him alive. However, let us hope for the best.

"If printers and binders and paper-makers continue to obtain the large wages and prices we hear of, it seems to me that the novel must come down in price, since it would be quite possible to produce even cheaper bindings, less good print, and more horrible paper than is being 'put out' at present; more millions of the public would buy, and the incurable novel reader would rejoice; such productions would also wear out more rapidly in the libraries and have to be more quickly replaced.

"The feelings of the author might suffer with such a plan (for authors are notoriously sensitive to the 'get up' of their works) but his, or more often her, pocket would find no reason to grumble; and certainly the bookseller, who is so often accused of being the stumbling block between publisher and author, would benefit—though to an outsider it would appear easy enough for the publishing firms to combine and throw off the 'tyranny' of the bookseller.

"Now, authors cannot combine. To begin with, it is too individual a profession; they are often extraordinarily ignorant of business, and many of them write for other reasons than the labourer's hire. Novel writing is about the only profession into which people will rush without training, or study, or practice. *Given the talent*, which is no more to be acquired than the shape of one's nose or the colour of one's eyes, it is an Art that can be learnt, that must be learnt, since genuine success can never be achieved without a working knowledge of the tools that have been given us.

"Who would dream, for example, of making a public appearance on a concert platform if he, or she, could play or sing only by ear? Who could expect to have a picture accepted for exhibition that had been painted solely by instinct? Yet novels get accepted and published (never mind how!) that betray the writer's ignorance of form, technique, and construction, not to mention the word grammar; and though from their very spontaneity such productions may meet with an ephemeral success, that success cannot continue because it is not founded on real work. It is novel-writing 'by ear.'

"If prices keep up to their present level—some say they will go higher, but this I doubt because the public will not stand it—the amateur novel will stand a poor chance; there will be more room at the libraries and at the booksellers for good work, and the standard of novel writing would rise. But if, as I have ventured to predict, prices go down, with further deterioration of print, covers, 'jackets,' and general get-up, publishers will cease to fill the air with laments, readers of sensational rubbish, and lovers of a good, well-written novel will be happy; and so will the authors."

Review of *East of Suez*, from *Punch*, Vol. 121 (October 23, 1901), p. 296.

The authoress gives us a collection of cleverly-written stories which, the Baron thinks it not too much to say, for graphic description, sharp incisive sketches of character, and effective dramatic situation, are second only to the *Plain Tales* by Rudyard Kipling; while two or three of them run even the best of Kipling's uncommonly close. Possessing the great merit of brevity, the reader, with a clear three-quarters of an hour ere the dressing bell rings, can get through any one of these stories in that space of time, only he will find his literary appetite so sharpened for another tale that only a still appetite for dinner will compel him to put aside the book as one "to be continued in his next" leisure moment.

Review of *East of Suez*, from *Vanity Fair*, Vol. 66 (October 17, 1901), p. 284.

This is an unusually able volume, for it is a volume of short stories which from beginning to end hold and arrest the reader's attention. They are stories of Anglo-Indian life, and are of love, of mystery, of revenge, and sometimes of terror; but they are all good, and even the "fat boy" himself would have admitted, we think, that they possess a compelling power of shivering. The first story, "Beynon of the Irrigation Department," is a love story where the "shadowy third" goes to the wall. Shadowy thirds always do. The clever point in this story is that the three actors of the drama are all worthy of our sympathy. The "Summoning of Arnold" is a tale of a husband and a devoted wife, and that bond which is in fiction (perhaps, too, in reality) stronger than death. The "Biscobra," the

last of this clever and dramatically handled sequence of Anglo-Indian stories, is among the most effective of the number. "The Belief of Bhagwan Bearer" concerns itself more with the "native," as does "Chunia, Ayah." "Caulfield's Crime" is of an Anglo-Indian, who "was a sulky, bad-tempered individual who made no friends, and was deservedly unpopular; but he had the reputation of being the finest shot in the Punjab." The story of "Caulfield's Crime" is one of the "creepiest" and one of the cleverest in a "creepy," clever volume.

Review of *East of Suez*, from the advertisements following Treherne's publication of Harold Tremayne's *Dross* (1901).

In this work Alice Perrin, who has already won a place for herself amongst present day writers, depicts the tragic phases of Anglo-Indian life, as well as the romantic and mysterious. Together with studies of native character and superstition, she has included ghost stories, love stories, and stories of the gruesome order—things which have been seen, felt, and heard, some say—imagined, others declare, whilst they were under the fascinating influence of the Eastern atmosphere. Some of them are just simple stories of the danger, temptations, and loneliness which many Anglo-Indians are obliged to face, and they are all true pictures of the life and country.

A well-known writer, who has been privileged to read the work in question, wrote as follows:—

"The whole collection maintains an even level of excellence. There is not that inequality one frequently finds in a volume of short stories. The author has caught the atmosphere of the East, and one feels it in her work. She does not weary the reader with prolonged passages of description, but suggests a complete picture in a few words, which is better. Some of her stories show considerable power in the region of the weird, and the supernatural, and have that quality of horror which ensures their being read, and talked about. I felt constrained, detached stories as they are, to read the greater number through at one sitting."

From Bhupal Singh's *A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction* (1934, reprinted by Curzon Press, 1975), excerpt from the section, "Rudyard Kipling and His School," pp. 86-88.

Mrs. Alice Perrin.

Another writer who shows the influence of Kipling is Mrs. Alice Perrin. She has written many novels of Anglo-Indian life and three volumes of short stories. She does not show the same knowledge of native life as Mrs. Steel, but what little she knows of Indian life, she utilizes with considerable skill as a background for novels of Anglo-Indian life. Being the wife of an engineer, she knows the mofussil more than the gay life of a provincial capital or of a hill station. Her first volume of short stories, *East of Suez*, was published in 1901, the year of the publication of *Kim*. Like Kipling, Mrs. Perrin is quite familiar with the life of Englishmen east of Suez and her presentation of it, at least in her first book, is similar to that of Kipling. Her observation is accurate and her understanding clear. But she does not possess Kipling's gift of literary craftsmanship. She lacks the satire, fun, and irony which distinguish Kipling's tales. *East of Suez* is more in the style of Kipling than *Rough Passages* (1926), and *Red Records* (1928). These latter were published recently, but they describe the days when motor-cars were unknown and English officials moved from place to place in *ekkas* and bullock-carts. The very title-page of *East of Suez* is a tribute to Kipling and bears his famous lines:

Ship me somewhere East of Suez
Where the best is like the worst,
Where there aren't no Ten Commandments
An' a man can raise a thirst.

Out of the fourteen stories of this volume, *Beynon, of the Irrigation Department*, *The Tiger Charm*, and *A Perverted Punishment* are stories of unhappy married life in India. *The Fakir of the Forest*, *A Planter's Wife*, and *The Spell*, in *Rough Passages*, deal with the same subject. Mrs. Perrin's men and women go wrong but with trepidation. They do not flout the Ten Commandments like Kipling's characters. Her tragedies are enacted in out-of-the-way places, in remote camps, jungles, or on lonely river banks, and do not give rise to scandals.

Mrs. Perrin's women are weak, but not deliberately wicked. She has no Mrs. Hauksbee or Mrs. Boynton.

Another respect in which Mrs. Perrin resembles Kipling is her interest in the occult and the mysterious. She records its influence on the life of her countrymen in the East. All the three volumes contain stories based on native beliefs in the evil eye, ghosts, and superstitions. In *The Summoning of Arnold* she describes with pathos the tragic death of a loving husband in India, just at the moment when his wife died on the operating table in England. *Caulfield's Crime* and *The Fakir's Island* relate the terrible consequences of insulting Indian sadhus and fakirs. *Red Records* contains as many as seven stories of the same type. *The Momiai-Walla Sahib* has for its theme the strange belief that Englishmen kill well-fed native lads to manufacture 'momiai'. *The Evil Eye* is a terrible story worked round the superstition that a leper father or mother must be buried alive if the children are to escape the disease. *Moore, The Packet of Letters*, and *The Footsteps in the Dust* are stories based on a belief in spirits. *The Brahminy Bull* in *Rough Passages* is set in the eerie atmosphere of re-incarnation. *The Belief of Bhagwan, Bearer, Chunia, Ayah* and *The Biscobra*, are tragic stories of superstition, vindictiveness, and devotion of Indian servants. *The Spell* narrates how Ganga, a servant, serves his master by saving his mistress from falling into temptation. *Rough Passages* has a few other stories suggestive of Kipling. *For India* describes the disillusionment of a rich English lady tourist who, like Paget, M.P., had come out to investigate the wrongs of the British administration in India but found the much-maligned officials devoted to the welfare of the masses. Mrs. Perrin's powers are seen at their best in some of these stories. Between the publication of *East of Suez* in 1901, and *Red Records* in 1928, Mrs. Perrin wrote a number of novels dealing with various phases of Anglo-Indian life, which show the same sympathy, the same power of observation, and vivid description as her shorter stories.

Appendix B - Cultural Contexts: Representations of the British Raj

“The Festival at Hurdwar, on the Ganges,” from Hezekiah Butterworth’s *Zigzag Journeys in India; Or, The Antipodes of the Far East: A Collection of the Zenānā Tales* (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1887), pp. 180-188.

It is probable that some of our readers may have met with allusions, in books of Asiatic travel and adventure, to the great religious festivals at Hurdwar, on the Ganges. These take place yearly, and are attended by such multitudes of people as collect in no part of the Christian world. We regard an assemblage of a hundred thousand people as immense, but what are we to think of a gathering that numbers hundreds of thousands of people, and even millions?

In the eyes of the natives the religious festivals at Hurdwar are in importance second only to the ceremonies of Juggernaut; and, indeed, since the Government of India no longer allows fanatics to cast themselves under the wheels of the idol car, the festival at Hurdwar has arisen to the highest rank in idolatrous sanctity.

Though the festival takes place yearly, the ceremonies are regarded as more holy after intervals of six and eleven years. The Koom Mela, a religious feast that occurs every eleven years, is attended by pilgrims from every part of India. The crowd usually numbers over two millions. But it is when the festivals occurring at intervals of six years and of eleven years happen to meet on the same year that the crowd is the largest, the importance of the fair the greatest, and the concourse of fanatic fakirs and haughty Brahmins from every hole and corner of India the most striking and remarkable.

At this particular fair or festival, which takes place but once in a century, merchants arrive from the most distant countries, — not from the different parts of India only, but from Persia, Thibet, China, Afghanistan, and even from Russia.

“While employed in elephant-shooting on the Ganges, ten years ago,” says a writer in “*Illustrated Travel*,” whose description we here follow, “we were fortunate in seeing this giant fair or festival, which happens but once in a man’s lifetime.

“As the day of the festival approached, the fakirs and the

Brahmins, a holy order in India, excited the gathering multitudes by fervent speeches and self-applied tortures, frightful contortions, and wild dances and gestures, to which the latter responded by loud shouts and yells.

"Early on the morning of the eventful day the assembled people, to the number of two or three millions, repaired to the banks of the river, and patiently awaited the signal for what they believed to be a work of regeneration and salvation. This is supposed to be accomplished by each individual who within a certain time, during the tinkling of a familiar bell, precipitates himself into the river, washes himself thoroughly, and repeats a certain prayer.

"If he succeed in going through this performance and leaving the water before the sound of the bell has ceased, his sins from birth are regarded as washed away, and a happy future after death assured.

"The other pilgrims, who, by reason of the great crowd, cannot reach the water in time to go through the whole performance as required by the Brahmins, receive blessings commensurate with the length of their stay in the water while the bell is ringing.

"Even the unfortunate pilgrims who altogether fail to enter the water at the right moment are consoled with the assurance that their load of wickedness has been partially removed.

"For the purpose of observing this part of the remarkable ceremonies, we took a large boat and caused it to be rowed to the opposite bank of the river. The gathering multitude which our position brought to view was made up of men and women of half a hundred tribes and nations, in every variety of dress and partial nakedness. The women's hair was loose and flying in the wind; all were newly and hideously painted; many were intoxicated, not only with opium and spirits, but with superstitious frenzy and impatient waiting.

"As the exciting moment approached, shouts rent the air; the priests harangued louder and louder; the fakirs grew wilder and wilder. Then gradually the great noise subsided and a partial silence ensued. The hush, in contrast with the noise that had preceded it, was most impressive and overawing.

"The swaying of the crowd at last showed that the excitement was on the increase, when suddenly a single bell sounded, immediately followed by a hundred more. Then with one accord

the people, shouting like madmen, rushed forward, and the foremost ranks threw themselves into the water. Then there arose a mighty shout, the many gongs joined in, and the ringers of the bells redoubled their efforts. The voices of the fakirs and the Brahmins were drowned like a child's weak cry in the tempest. The confusion, the crushing, the struggling for very life, and the surging of the mad masses at the water's edge, baffle any attempt to convey to the mind of the reader the realities of the scene.

"We no sooner saw the vast numbers assembled on the banks, and observed the temper they were in, than we became assured that some terrible catastrophe must follow. But our anticipations fell short of the frightful reality.

"As the first rows of men and women reached the water they were overturned by the people in their rear, who passed over their bodies into still deeper water, and in their turn suffered the same fate at the hands of the onrushing crowd behind them. By the time the deep water was reached the numbers in the river were so increased as to press back the smaller crowd still remaining on dry land. The shouts of excitement were changed to shrieks and passionate cries for help; the men under water struggled with those above them; weak women were carried out by the stream or were trampled upon; men pulled each other down, regardless of purpose.

"Then the survivors, trying to escape from the water, met the dry crowd still charging down to death, which increased the dire confusion. The bells and gongs meanwhile were doing their best to drown the cries of the victims, but fruitlessly.

"It was a horrid sight, and one for which I was quite unprepared, notwithstanding all I had heard before. As soon as we saw the commencement of the catastrophe, we tried to make our native boatman row closer to the scene of distress; but this he utterly refused to do, saying that if we approached nearer than we were we should be fired upon.

"Next day we learned that the multitude of devotees had been most wonderfully preserved; *only* four hundred and fifty, so far as was known, had lost their lives in the river.

"Such is the festival at Hurdwar, on the Ganges, one of those events that show how strong is the sentiment of religious worship in the most unenlightened lands, and that call upon the Christian world to make the greatest possible efforts to carry to the ignorant

and superstitious heathen the knowledge of the true God.”

The Ganges is the gift of the Himalayas. It indeed fell from heaven, and falls from heaven continually. The highest point of the earth's surface is Mount Everest, twenty-nine thousand feet high. One sees it as he drifts along the Ganges, and knows that the water on which he is sailing is but a broad stream from those mountains of which that peak is the crown.

Mount Everest has been called “the summit of the earth and the roof of the world.” It is five miles high, as high as the lowest known depth of the ocean. A staircase to the top would be more than seventy miles long.

No human step has ever reached the top. At the height of about twenty thousand feet the head becomes dizzy, and it is impossible to go on.

“Fakirs,” from Mary Hield’s *The Land of Temples; Or, Sketches from Our Indian Empire* (London: Cassell, 1882), pp. 82-87.

At certain periods in the year feasts are held at Benares to the different gods, at which times the streets are so crowded with pilgrims and holy bulls that travellers have difficulty in making their way.

The broad flights of steps leading up to the temples are trodden by thousands of these Hindoos, who convince themselves that the highest of earthly bliss is to be in Benares, and close to the sacred river.

Some of them are to be seen carrying urns, which they throw into the water, for inside the urns are the ashes of their dead friends, who have died many miles away. These urns are therefore brought by loving hands, and cast into the sacred stream, in order that the souls of the departed may be sure of gaining admission into heaven.

There is one class of people among these idol-worshippers who are considered, both by themselves and their companions, as especially religious, and these are what are known as beggars.

Mahommedan beggars are known by the name of fakir, or dervish; a Hindoo beggar is called a sunyasse. A very wretched time these poor creatures have, for they put themselves to all kinds

of torture, and think that as a reward for their suffering they will go straight to heaven when they die, instead of being made to live again in some animal, as most of the Hindoos expect will be their fate.

It is the doctrine of what we call transmigration that in a great measure accounts for the merciful treatment of animals exercised by most of the Hindoos. They believe that when a friend dies his soul passes into some animal, and in this way he is punished for any sins that he has committed when he was a human being. Possibly his crimes might have been so numerous that his soul would have to pass successively into five or six animals; consequently, a Hindoo feels that if he were to kill even a dog or cat, he might be slaying the body of some dead friend. For this reason it very often happens that the man who without much concern could strike a fellow-creature dead would, at the same time, be gentle and humane to dumb animals.

Near the Ganges, at Benares, there are many lonely desolate places, where in dark holes or caves these deluded creatures, the fakirs, hide.

It is almost impossible to believe the misery that some of them inflict upon themselves. One man stood for years on one leg, until it was full of wounds, another doubled his hand without opening it for so long that his finger-nails grew fast into his flesh. Some of them fasten heavy weights to their bodies, which they constantly drag about with them, while others crawl for years on their hands and knees.

One traveller tells us that he once saw a man who had resolved to keep his arms always above his head, until he had completely lost the power of using them. If you try to do so for ten minutes you can imagine what a hard task the man had set himself.

Poor fellow! He had no covering on his body, his knotty dusty hair hung over his shoulders, and his face looked much more like a wild beast's than like a human face. His upstretched arms looked withered and dried-up, and his finger nails, that had not been cut for twenty years, looked like long claws.

These fakirs have an idea that tigers will not hurt them, consequently they go and live near the dens of the animals; but of course this is a great mistake, for tigers have been seen dragging some of them into the forest. Do you wonder that on hearing tales such as these, that people in England and other countries should

long to go over and tell the poor Hindoos that they are mistaken in thinking they are doing any good by thus torturing themselves?

The will of our Heavenly Father, who loves all His children (both black and white), is that we should be happy; and although it is the duty of all of us to endure patiently what suffering and sorrow may come to us, we have no right to bring any upon ourselves unnecessarily, and thus become unfit for the work we have to do.

Not very long ago, one of these poor deluded creatures actually roasted the calf of his leg, a number of Hindoos standing round him at the time, uttering exclamations of wonder and admiration at his heroic conduct. Another poor man for years had covered his body with mud; every morning he put on carefully a fresh coating of it, so that, as he wore no other clothing, he actually might be said to be clothed in mud. Wishing to add still further to his misery, he cut off two or three of his toes and fingers, by way of honouring a god in one of the temples, that represented a monkey with two tails and four arms.

Any number of strangely horrible deeds performed by these fakirs might be told, but, sad to say, in nearly every case the victims who thus, of their own free will, made themselves suffer were coarse, cruel, wicked men. Their constant suffering made them irritable and savage in disposition, while the degraded life they led made them partake more of the nature of wild beasts than of human beings.

“A Tiger Hunt,” from William Daniell and Rev. Hobart Caunter’s *The Oriental Annual, or Scenes in India* (London: Edward Bull, 1834), pp. 252-254.

During our stay in [Agra], we joined a tiger hunt, which took place a few miles from the town, where the cover was thick, and game of all kinds plentiful. Indeed, the jungles in this part of the country abound with beasts of prey, so that we had little chance of being disappointed in our expectations of excellent sport. Among the native Hindoos who joined our party there were several bowmen, who possessed such dexterity in the use of their arms that they could bring down a crow flying with the greatest ease. We had not long entered the jungle, when a large tiger was started

from behind a clump of bamboo. It had no means of escaping in front, as it was opposed by several of the party on elephants, which stood with evident tokens of dismay as their formidable enemy approached them. The tiger seemed confused, stopped for a moment, and uttered a loud yell, but was urged forward by shouts from behind. It now suddenly sprang towards one of the elephants, which immediately turned round as the animal neared him, exposing the least susceptible part of his body to the gripe of his active foe. The tiger, upon reaching the elephant, instantly leaped upon his haunches, into which it fixed its formidable claws, lacerating him considerably, and causing him to snort with anguish. The elephant, thus beset, pressed his ponderous body against a tree, beside which he had luckily stationed himself, and thus squeezed the tiger so unmercifully, that it was glad to relinquish its hold, and to drop from the elephant's side. It then limped towards the cover from which it had been first started, but stopped at the root of a peepul,¹ panting from the effects of its late exertion, and the severe pressure of the elephant's ribs, when a shikarry,² who had taken shelter among the lower branches, discharged his matchlock at the maimed brute, the ball hitting it in the very centre of the forehead. The tiger rolled upon his back, when the man, thinking he had despatched it, began to descend from the tree, but, to his amazement, the enraged creature sprang upon him, fixed its claws in his legs, and would have dragged him to the earth, had not one of the bowmen advanced to his rescue. The latter discharged a shaft with unerring precision at the tiger's head, which entered the right eye and transfixed the brain. The animal immediately relaxed its hold, and fell dead, while the poor shikarry was taken from his perilous position a good deal torn about the legs, though not dangerously hurt. It appeared, upon examining the dead tiger, that the ball which had struck it in the head, had been turned by the thickness of the skull, having hit it obliquely, and, passing under the skin, had escaped near the left ear, so that the brute was merely stunned for the moment.

The elephant upon which the tiger leaped was so severely wounded that it was very sulky for some days, and it was a considerable time before it could be prevailed upon, either by coaxing or urging, to venture again into the jungle. The elephant has naturally

¹ A tree very common in the jungles of India [Caunter's note].

² Shikarry is a native hunter [Caunter's note].

a great dread of the tiger, and in many instances will not approach within many yards even of a dead one.

“The Indian Elephant,” from Hezekiah Butterworth’s *Zigzag Journeys in India; Or, The Antipodes of the Far East: A Collection of the Zenānā Tales* (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1887), pp. 245-246.

The animals associated with the stories of the transmigrations of Buddha are regarded as sacred in Buddhist countries. One of the legends of Buddha relates that when he was once travelling, he found a wounded tiger whose young were starving. He gave his body to the cats for food, and was rewarded by being born into a higher state. The white elephant is regarded as sacred in Siam because Buddha himself was once a white elephant.

The elephant in India is not worshipped by the Brahmins, as were the monkeys; but it is the most useful animal in the country, and in intelligence and feeling most nearly approaches man. There is something noble and often affecting in this animal's friendship for his keeper.

In one of the old provinces of the Rajahs it was a custom to execute criminals by causing a giant elephant to place his foot upon the head of the one who had been condemned to death. The criminal's head was placed upon a block; and the keeper of the elephant, seated on the animal's neck, superintended the execution.

There was a story that Anna used to ask Old Seventee to relate, that always haunted me, and I seldom afterwards met an elephant without recalling it.

There was an old elephant that had become greatly attached to his young and kind keeper. The young man rebelled against the Rajah, who was a tyrant, and was captured and thrown into prison.

The elephant showed that his memory was fixed on his young keeper. He sought the places where they had been together; he seemed to be constantly looking for him and expecting him.

Being a ponderous animal, he was taken into the service of the Rajah, given a new keeper, and taught to perform executions.

A new rebellion arose, on account of which the former rebels in prison were condemned to death.

Among those brought out for execution was the young man for

whom the elephant had formed so great an attachment.

As soon as the elephant saw him it trembled with joy or fear. It seemed to comprehend the situation, and with almost human intelligence and nobleness to resolve to disobey orders.

The young man's head was laid upon the block. The elephant was driven forward; it raised its foot and touched the young man's head with it as gently as the hand of a sister or a lover would have stroked it, but refused to press it.

The animal was pronged. It bore the punishment for a few minutes; then, seizing the young man, ran for the jungle, and left him where he would escape.

The Indian elephant lives to a great age, — more than a hundred years, perhaps two hundred. Its trunk is said to contain forty thousand muscles. It is often killed for ivory. The state elephants of the Rajahs are the finest animals in the world.

“The Bis-cobra, the Goh-sámp, and the Scorpion,” *Nature*, Vol. 20, October 9, 1879, p. 553.

Snakes of all kinds are held in great horror by the natives of India, and they slay indiscriminately and ruthlessly all they come across, but this horror pales before the terror inspired even by the names of the bis-cobra and goh-sámp,—terror so great, that, if met with, the harmless animals are given the widest berth possible, and their destruction is never attempted. Though actual animals, they are virtually mythical, that is as regards the deadly properties assigned to them, and we easily recognise in them the originals of the flame-breathing dragon and deadly basilisk. The gaze of the bis-cobra is awful even from a distance and its bite is instant death; and if the goh-sámp breathes upon, at you, you fall dead at once.

With such awful reputations attached to them, I lost no time, my early career, in attempting to make the acquaintance of these formidable reptiles, and, after much labour, succeeded. No one would help me in procuring a bis-cobra, and my servants repeatedly warned me against the risk and madness of the attempt. At one time I had engaged the services of a savage woodsman in collecting birds' eggs, and to him I, one day, applied for a bis-cobra, but he at first refused, and it was only the promise of large bakhsheesh that ultimately induced him to promise his assistance. After several days he appeared carrying an earthen pot at the end

of a long bamboo, and meeting me, whispered mysteriously in my ear "Sahib! bis-cobra!" Glad of the news, I summoned my servants, who, when they heard the reason of the summons, reluctantly formed a distant semicircle. The pásee cautiously put down the pot and also retired at a distance. In no way dismayed, I approached the pot, moved the dirty rag around its mouth and looked in. As expected, I found a beautiful brown and yellow lizard, freely protruding in its fear a forked sanguine tongue, and anxious to escape. On taking it up it seized my hand with its delicate teeth, and in this position I held it up to the horror-stricken servants who exclaimed in fear "Sahib! sahib! chōr do, phenk (Master! master! let (it) go, throw (it) away)." Then, on my declining to do either, they, like the barbarians of old, waited anxiously to see whether I "should have swollen or fallen down dead suddenly," and, seeing no harm, they quietly dispersed. My adventure with the goh-sámp was unsought and equally satisfactory.

Walking in my garden one day, I met the gardener running away with affrighted look from a pear tree, and asked the reason; he could only gasp out "Goh-sámp, sahib, goh-sámp!" and implore my return. Delighted at the opportunity, I pressed on, and soon saw the awful reptile trying to dodge my gaze; a large scaly, uncanny looking tree lizard about fourteen inches long. In the distance the mali (gardener) implored me to beware his "phoonk" (blast of breath), but I courted it, by trying to dislodge him, which I succeeded in doing by shaking the bough, and then he threw himself on the ground and scuttled up another tree. Both lizards are absolutely harmless, and I believe a poisonous lizard is quite unknown.

The scorpion is not dreaded like the snake, but, like it, is inevitably killed. Its habits and pursuits well deserve study; my observance of the former has enabled me to clear away (to my own satisfaction) many obscurities with regard to its poison weapon and the mode of using it. And let me declare at once that the popular idea regarding scorpionic suicide is a delusion based on impossibility. Owing to the position and nature of its weapon, the animal cannot strike itself. It does not protrude a sting as bees, *et hec genus omne*, do, and the line of strike is downwards and backwards, with at times a lateral but yet downward motion. As literally described in Holy Writ, *it strikes but does not sting*; and its motion in so doing may

be imitated by seizing the tip of the index or middle finger with the thumb, and suddenly liberating the former.

The poison is acid and albuminous; the latter I presume, as on placing a living specimen in spirit, the animal in its death throes ejected it, and it immediately coagulated in threads.

The pain and constitutional disturbance attendant on scorpion strike are often very severe, and children have occasionally succumbed; but adults only complain of the pain, which generally passes off in half-an-hour. On two occasions I have passed through a host of migrating crickets, once by day and once by night; on the first occasion my carriage wheels crunched for a mile through a cricket migration; and on the second my palkee bearers' feet slid about amid crushed crickets; on this occasion one of the bearers yelled out that a scorpion (out on a cricket spree) had struck his foot, and hobbled up to the palkee. Having the means at hand I applied a paste of ipecacuanha and laudanum, with almost immediate relief, and the bearer trudged on with the rest.

Peshawar

H. F. Hutchinson

Excerpt from "The Grand Trunk Road—Its Localities," *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. XXI, 1853, pp. 170-178.

We have lately directed the reader's attention to *Calcutta in the Olden Time*; and now start from the city of palaces to Delhi, along a route which calls up vivid associations of the past, along with a view of nature, always blooming amid the ruins of man's handy work.

Our article is not designed so much for the information of Mofussilites, who are, or ought to be, familiar with the facts we shall state; but for those residents in Calcutta and its neighbourhood, or those strangers from England, who wish, in the absence of a North India "Murray" to have a descriptive outline of a country they propose to visit for health or business, and who are anxious to obtain hints and references suggestive of further inquiry—to know what can be seen in a tour of six weeks to the North West Provinces, at an outlay of 400 rupees. In 1850 a single seat from Calcutta to Benares cost 165 rupees, now it costs only 140 rupees from *Calcutta to Meerut*. We do not write for those who wish to make a tour in the mode of the London Cockney, "getting

over the greatest possible amount of ground in the smallest possible amount of time," irrespective of what is to be seen along the way, like the London lady, who, when crossing the Simplon, was occupied with one of Bulwer's novels.

The number of books, descriptive of places in the North West Provinces, is quite puzzling to a traveller, and almost all are, to a great extent, echoes of *Heber's Journal*, which stands pre-eminently the *Magnum opus* as the guide to the traveller in India. His descriptions are generally accurate and true, and, to a great degree, they are suited for 1853. Some slight mistakes occur here and there, which, it is to be regretted, were not corrected by Murray, when he brought out his cheap edition of Heber in the Colonial Library....

Among the works of modern English tourists, are Lieut. Bacon's *First Impressions*, 1831 to 1836, written in a lively style, describing a sporting life in the North West Provinces, giving a good account of Delhi, Agra, &c.; *Parbury's Hand-Book*; *Major Archer's Tour*, 1828; *Stocqueler's Hand-Book of India*, 1844, is the work of a practical man, who gives a considerable amount of information. *Mundy's Pen and Pencil Sketches*, 1828—*Skinner's Excursions in India*, in 1826—*Sleeman's Bambles and Recollections of an Indian Official*, 1844, abound with lively sketches of the peasantry and their customs.

Nor have ladies' pens been idle; we have a *Narrative of a Three Months' March in India*, in 1833, by the wife of an officer, giving a full detail of the roughing it on a march, breakage, &c. &c: she went no higher than Cawnpur, the book is meagre. *Mrs. Montanbard's Year and a Day in the East*, in 1844. *Mrs. Parke's Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*, 2 volumes, 1850, is a mine of information of the most useful kind, abounding in antiquarian descriptions; she is the Lady Wortley Montague of India.

Joseph's Two Maps of the Grand Trunk Road are indispensable—in those are marked the distances, dak bungalows, chaukies, post offices, &c. *Captain Sherwill's Geological Map* is of the utmost value to every one who takes the slightest interest in the mineral productions of the country. *Daniel's Drawings*, taken in 1788, give a very good idea of some of the magnificent buildings in the Upper Provinces. *Tassin's Map of Bengal and Behar* is good, except that it supplies us plentifully with roads where none such exist—to fill up—just as the Old Dutch filled up the blanks in their maps, by

inserting mountain ranges.

There is little instruction or pleasure in visiting places in the North West Provinces, or anywhere else, unless persons are acquainted with the previous history of the localities; without this, the genius loci cannot be realized, and the principle of the association of ideas cannot be called into play. The great cities of the North West Provinces are great from their connection with Mogul times; we would therefore recommend to the intending traveller a diligent preparatory study of *Elphinstone's India*, *Martin's Eastern India*, *Hamilton's Gazetteer*, and *Macfarlane's Indian Empire*. What interest could Delhi have for a man not acquainted with the history of Timur's successors, the Moguls, who styled themselves "the lights of religion, conquerors of the world"? Just as little as St. Petersburg could have for one who never heard of Peter the Great, or as the Kremlin at Moscow would have for one unread in the deeds of the old Czars.

Some knowledge of the language is requisite, if the traveller does not wish to be cheated and imposed on. Griffins are considered lawful prey, and interpreters are as bad as the guides on the Continent:—read Baron Von Schomberg's experience on this point. The person who knows Bengali will very soon understand what is said in Hindi, as both are dialects of the Sanskrit.

Though the road between Calcutta and Benares has little historic interest, yet the lover of Natural History, Botany, or Geology, may find many objects to delight him, as the works of Jacquemont and Hooker show—there may be "sermons in stones." Prepared by such studies for the enjoyment of country scenery, the traveller may say, with the author of *Childe Harold*:—

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
 There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
 There is society, where none intrudes,
 By the deep sea, and music in its roar,
 I love not man the less, but nature more.
 From these our interviews, in which I steal
 From all I may be or have been before,
 To mingle with the Universe, and feel
 What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal."

The French Government have published *Jacquemont's Journals*

and Scientific Researches, in 5 volumes, 4to.—Dr. Hooker has also published *Notes of a Tour in India*; he was sent by Government on a botanical mission to India. Sherwill, in his *Statistics of Behar*, gives us a list of ninety different trees and shrubs, which line the forests along the Trunk Road in that Zillah. We hope that the intercourse with the North West Provinces will lead to a taste being formed for Natural History and botanical subjects, and that the love for country scenery, so natural to Englishmen, will be fostered in India.

Good temper is a great requisite—to allow for contingencies. Our English travellers, who visit Switzerland and the Black Forest, would be often amused at the impatience of your regular Ditcher, when he goes twenty miles from Calcutta: if every thing is not in Chowringhi order, he is highly indignant—Transit and all other Companies have to bear his storm of indignation—he must have his “comforts” everywhere.

The moral and intellectual benefits of travelling is a subject that has been dwelt upon from the days of Cicero to the days of Chesterfield, who enlarges on the benefits of “Le Grand Tour.” We cannot make “Le Grand Tour” in India; but we have the Grand Trunk Road; and we trust that independent of the medical benefits resulting from a change of scene, and relaxation from the ordinary routine of duty—the advantages to be realized from seeing men and manners at large, will serve as a stimulus to our denizens of the Ditch, to enlarge their Indian horizon, and see what India really is—not the Calcutta anglicised type of India “overgrown splendour in squalor,” but that presented by the energetic population of the North West, and by the remains of the glories of former days. We write with a most earnest desire to persuade all those who have time and means, to pay a visit to the North West Provinces, and there to gain enlarged views of things, and a nearer acquaintance with the condition of the people. The Bengali possesses various good qualities, but if you wish to see a specimen of the real Hindu character, you must visit the North West Provinces—you there see a manly bearing, very different from that of the crouching, sycophant Bengali.

The days when the brandy bottle and the Zenana formed the resource from ennui to the European “exile,” are passing away—sights and scenery will give an agreeable relaxation to the Indian resident, whether he be sportsman, sketcher, naturalist, &c.—

neither need this relaxation be confined, as heretofore, to a visit “*so far north as Krishnaghur,*” or a rustication in Chandernagur.

We hope the Railway will soon carry the traveller quickly over dull parts of the road, that it will be to our Ditchers as the Moscow Railway is to the people of St. Petersburg; but our experience from travelling twice through Belgium by Railway is—if you visit a country not as a merchant, but as a tourist, the Railways do not enable you to see the land—you are so hurried from place to place, that memory retains very indistinct traces of the peculiar features of the landscape. Our own recollections of Belgian towns are very dim from that circumstance. Besides, subjects of antiquarian or botanical interest can only be examined by slow travelling—one can gain no idea of the contour of a country from a railroad. We passed through some magnificent scenery between Malines and Aix-la-Chapelle, but seen from a rushing rail-carriage, it appeared all tame.

The Grand Trunk Road—the only road in the Lower Provinces, after our possession of Bengal for a century—and that not yet completed, eight bridges being wanting between Calcutta and Benares—has cost fifty lakhs. Last century the line of communication with the Upper Provinces lay along the Ganges route, which was adjacent to the old capitals of Bengal, Gaur, and Murshidabad. It was commenced about 1833, and is a noble monument to Lord W. Bentinck. He received the name of William the *Conqueror* from parts of this road being metalled with kankar! Its opening has given us a knowledge of the country, like that the Russians have now by the railroad between Petersburg and Moscow. Previous to his time there was only a road via Sulkea, Bankura, Hazaribhag, &c., on which the Government expended several lakhs, now entirely out of repair; it contained no hard material, and was merely a line, marked by two ditches, from which a little earth was occasionally thrown to fill up ruts or hollows made by the rain, while bearers were supplied on requisitions made to zemindars. The present one is thirty feet wide, fourteen of which are metalled, and is forty-four miles shorter between Calcutta and Benares than the old one. Eight rivers, however, still remain unbridged, and we have it on good authority, that three times as much money have been spent on the construction of the road in the Lower Provinces, as ought to have sufficed for completing those bridges and keeping the road in thorough repair. It

was under the Military Board.

Not only is the Trunk Road a scene for tourists, but it also presents another subject of interest. We believe, notwithstanding Calcutta prejudices to the contrary, that Bombay is destined to be the great steam-port of India, and that Guzerat will be again what it was in Portuguese and Mogul days, when the little port of Tarda, near Calcutta, was large enough to accommodate the trade with Bengal, while Scinde was the seat of a thriving commerce. The route to Europe, viâ Bombay, will probably lie along part of this line—are we to be always doomed to traverse so many miles to the South, and so many to the North again, rounding Ceylon, &c, in order, after all, to reach the same latitude as that of Bombay? Twenty years hence, we trust it will be done pleasantly, viâ Mirzapur, Jubbulpur, and Nagpur, or as Mr. Turnbull suggests, by the valley of the Soane, and then along the valley of the Nerbudda or of the Tapti. We are glad to find that the mails between Calcutta and Bombay have, of late, begun to be carried viâ Mirzapur and Jubbulpur, instead of viâ Midnapur, the latter route being through a dense jungly country, of no commercial or other importance, and where the coolies are often carried off by tigers, or the letters are reduced to a state of pulp. Even now four days take the traveller to Mirzapur, the Calcutta of the North West Provinces; from thence a pleasant trip along a good road to Jubbulpur, and from that place, on viâ Nagpur, one can move at his leisure to Bombay.

The Trunk Road to Benares having been commenced only since 1832, and being constructed on the plan of making it as straight as possible, irrespective of towns, there are no cities on the line; you do not meet, as on the old Ganges route, with such places as Murshidabad, Rajmahal, Bhagulpur, Monghyr, Buxar, Ghazipur, yet we trust to show that there are various subjects of interest along this line.

In the North West Provinces police chaukies are located within hail of each other, along every two miles of the road; and in Bengal they have lately adopted this good practice. There is also a *European* overseer of roads stationed at every fifty miles. Medical assistance may be obtained at various places—in fact, a lady may travel along the road as securely as she would along the streets of Calcutta, perhaps even more so.

The *dâk bungalows*, the modern form of the Mogul serais, are very comfortable; they line the road at an average distance of

twelve miles; between Calcutta and Benares there are thirty-two. Each is provided with two bath rooms, two dressing rooms, and two bed rooms, with bed-steads, while some have more accommodation: hot water, milk, chapatis, grilled-fowl, curry, eggs, are obtainable at all, and in some you may procure mutton, kid, champagne, beer, &c. &c. Knives and forks, plates, spoons, tea-pots, salt, are furnished in the dâk bungalows, while a khansama, cook, bhisti, mehter, are also provided by Government. Small libraries of religious books are placed in those bungalows located in the North West Provinces, which are very convenient for travellers stopping in them in hot weather. The increase of travellers is bringing those bungalows more and more into demand; European houses cannot now be turned into "Red Lions."

Notwithstanding the complaints made against the Transit Companies, of their occasional bad horses, yet the improvement in travelling effected by them has been great and wonderful. Instead of husband and wife having to be boxed up for sixteen days, in those portable ovens, or coffins, "the conveyance, horsed by man," "horrible boxes, open at both ends," and most thoroughly unsocial, yclep'd palkis, a costly and fatiguing conveyance, shaking your poor bones *quantum sufficit*, travelling at three miles per hour, and at eight annas a mile, and having sleep at night completely disturbed by the bearers at every stage poking a filthy torch in your face and crying out for bakshish; independent of this, lying in an irksome recumbent position, you cannot enjoy the view of scenery or of buildings, cannot well read or have any social intercourse; but the days of palkis, of *demurrages*, and *disbonest pitarra-wallahs*, are passed—on the whole route from Calcutta to Delhi, we meet with few travellers by them. Old Terry would now rejoice that "men are not turned into pack-horses, a thing most unworthy of a man." There is another mode of travelling—marching *a la militaire* twelve miles daily, having to take a tent, servant, hackeries, utensils of all sorts, with the chance of waking in the morning and finding all your wearing apparel and money carried off by thieves. We know the case of an officer and his wife some years ago, who were sleeping in their tents near *Maharajganj*, beyond Benares. Awaking in the morning, their clothes and all their valuables were gone; the lady had to borrow clothes, and by means of a Government officer they got their keys back by purchase from the thieves! We know

another case, of a Missionary, who went to a *mêla* to preach, and while sleeping in his tent at night, the thieves came, robbed him of all his clothes, and he was obliged to go home wrapped up in a blanket. The skilful achievements of thieves on travellers in tents, in this road, as well as in the fortress of Fort William, Calcutta, if collected, would form as interesting a volume as ever did the "Irish rogues and rapparees," or the adventures of Jack Shepherd or Dick Turpin. We can now roll along, by the aid of those Companies, at an average of six miles per hour, or 100 miles daily, allowing four hours' stoppage, changing the position at pleasure, from a sitting one to a recumbent, by drawing a board across the seat: or mount morning and evening on the box, to view the scenery of the country. These gharris serve as sitting-rooms by day, as bed-rooms by night, as a wardrobe, a library, and a kitchen, rendering the traveller independent of hospitality. If detained on the road, you can easily make your own coffee in your carriage, light your lamp and read yourself to sleep. Horses are changed at about every six miles, and coachmen at sixty; there are 156 stages from Calcutta to Meerut, but our ditch traveller must not expect all the conveniences of Chowringhi, he must be prepared, like all other travellers, to rough it a little; he must not imagine, that out of 350 horses, which he will employ between Calcutta and Delhi, and back again, *every one* is to be good. There are ups and downs in horses, as well as in life—he must study the doctrine of chances and also the past—think of the time when Benares was a two and half months' journey from Calcutta, by a budgerow, exposed to all the perils of treacherous sand banks, falling in banks, currents, north westers, roguish *mánjis* who rove a hole in the boat, mosquitoes, fleas and flies, with an occasional day, perchance, on a sand bank; so that the voyage was attended with more risk and infinitely more trouble than one to London from Calcutta, though sometimes these voyages were very social, when "floating villages" of budgerows, those "inverted cocked hats," sailed in company. Read the Journals of travellers on the Continent, thirty years ago, their descriptions of teasing Custom House officers, roguish inn-keepers, bad carriages, &c. When we consider the difficulties those Transit Companies had to encounter, the mortality of good horses in the hills, the badness of the Bengali attendants on the horses, the state of part of the road sometimes, instead of grumbling, we are surprised that they have succeeded so well. In the course of

twelve months they will, very likely, fix their head-quarters at Mangalpur, which will possess the advantage of enabling them to control more effectually the most difficult part of the road, the passage through the hills.

The system of travelling by *horse dâk* originated, as almost all improvements have done, in connection with the Government of the North West Provinces. Ten years ago, Mr. Riddel, the present Post Master General of the North West Provinces, and Dr. Paton, late Post Master of Alighur, commenced the plan. Trucks drawn by one horse, and conveying a palanquin, were first employed; but they soon gave way to the convenient palki-ghari; passengers increased, and this led to the formation of the *Inland Transit Company* in 1849, for running a horse dâk on the road. It was started by a native, Tantimul, the famous contractor of the Allahabad and Cawnpur boat bridges. They ran the mails by contract—the original proprietors were Mr. Gee, a Cawnpur merchant, Mr. McLaughlin, Ex-Post-Master of Cawnpur, now Director of the Himalaya Tea Cultivation Company, and Lalla Tantimul. From Calcutta to Burhi they have nine horses at every stage, six from that to Benares, and four from Benares to Meerut. From Burdwan to Meerut the Company hire horses from sircars at about fifteen rupees monthly; they have reduced their fares in 1852, above Benares, from four annas to two annas a mile, and below, from five annas to three annas. In 1850 Mr. Atkinson started a rival Company, but he soon failed—after him Mr. Probett, of Cawnpur, started a Company; and then the *North West Dâk Company*, a Calcutta Company, *but* well managed, providing excellent carriages, and good horses. This Company employ 600 syces, 200 suwars, 80 native writers, 60 coachmen, and 20 European overseers. Their monthly outlay is 12,000 rupees, their operations extend over a space of 1,200 miles. Such have been the benefits from this horse dâk, that letters reached Calcutta from Benares, all last hot season, in 52 hours, instead of 120, under the old system.

The traveller need not limit his time for a visit to the North West Provinces to the cold weather, for though some delay may arise here and there, in the rains, from ferries and swollen rivulets, yet there is the advantage of a richer vegetation clothing the ground, relieving that arid appearance the North West Provinces have in the cold weather; besides, the horses are not so over-

worked by the constant rush of passengers.

J.E. Dawson's "Woman in India: Her Influence and Position," *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. 83, 1886, pp. 347-370.

Part I.

Our present subject is not that of the Indian native lady. Her hapless case, in all its pathetic helplessness, has not failed in securing eloquent pens to paint its disabilities; and noble lives, inspired by unselfish devotion, are spent in seeking its amelioration. But though that on which we are about to dwell, touches ourselves more nearly, it yet bears more closely, than may at first sight appear, on a subject that is deservedly attracting, from the highest to the lowest circles, much sympathetic interest in our land. While the native lady, immured from infancy to age, within the bare and silent walls of those castles of ignorance and listlessness, they call their homes, calls for our compassion; is there, we would ask, no touch of pathos, no appeal to sympathy in the position of the Englishwoman in India? No need of a friendly voice to plead with and for her? No call to reflect as to her actual condition? as to the influences of the new mode of life to which she is subjected on her mind and character, as well as upon the influence she herself is having on the destinies of that great Empire, over which her husbands, brothers, or fathers in various capacities, are exerting a certain sway?

The days are long past, when in units or by twos and threes, English ladies landed on these shores, braving the dangers of the sea and risks of climate; to be eagerly appropriated by the lucky-favored few, out of a host of aspirants to their hands: and who reigned henceforth the petted and adored queens of the little circles they adorned. They now come in scores; and as facilities for travel increase, means of communication multiply, and our picked men elect India as the scene of their career, so must their wives, daughters and sisters follow in larger numbers. Year by year, the eastward emigration is increasing. English mothers are sending forth their sons and their daughters, and while steam and wire do their work of unification, are not India and England being yet more firmly welded into one Empire by the unseen yet indestructible threads that unite millions of loving hearts across the

seas?

Must not, then, such questions as these become both nationally and individually of ever-increasing importance. What is the influence of Indian life and surroundings on England's daughters? Do the circumstances of their Indian homes tend to the development of that which is noblest and best in them? Are their lives, as a whole, on a higher or a lower level than those of their sisters at home? Does their wider knowledge of the world, their opportunities of travel and observation, tend to their intellectual advancement? Are their lives telling for good or for evil on the people among whom their lot is cast, and between whose women-kind and themselves so great a gulf is fixed?

Surely these are questions that must be issuing in differing words from hundreds of mothers' hearts who have seen their young daughters, their faces to the East, leave fearlessly the shelter of their happy English homes, to share for weal or woe, the fate of bridegroom or brother, as well as from those of others who through long years of separation have anticipated, with mingled feelings of hope and dread, their daughter's adolescence, and their consequent return to the land that gave them birth, and to the risks and chances of Indian life!

English ladies in India may generally be classed under three several heads:—

1st.—Those who might *par excellence* be termed Anglo-Indians. Whose parents, and it may be grand-parents, were Indian officials; whose antecedents, early associations and future naturally are linked to Indian life, and whose enforced residence in England for educational purposes has been regarded as a parenthesis in their existence.

2ndly.—Ladies who come to India at a maturer age, with habits and character formed, and tastes developed.

3rdly.—Those who first come to India as young brides, but who have had no previous Indian associations.

Let us picture to ourselves the case of the young girl, who, at a tender age, was deported to England for education, and whose bringing up has remained in the hands of relatives or others to whom she was entrusted by her parents.

What to the young and clinging heart of childhood must have been the agony of that moment, when either on the platform of a railway station or on the deck of one of our great steam vessels,

she felt for the last time the clasp of a mother's arms and the impress of a father's kiss? But years pass quickly; and impressions on the waxen tablets of childhood's memory rapidly succeed and obliterate each other. Fainter and fainter become the memories of a distant home: and with home, of the parents with whom her life in it was passed.

True, at greater and lesser intervals, these parents will have appeared upon the scene, and taken a brief part in her existence. But by the time the estrangement of forgetfulness was beginning to melt into use and fellowship, the furlough has expired, and the bond with difficulty woven, has been ruthlessly snapped asunder. Youth is impatient of suffering. Only the very small minority among the young happily, are capable of long retention of useless regrets. Those who most constantly and actively are occupied with a child's comfort and well-being, will naturally, to a certain extent, supersede in its memory the parents, whom it sees but rarely. Thus the saddest, yet inevitable result of Indian life, is the loosening of the sacred family bond. It is the fashion now-a-days to talk of the luxurious lives of Indian officials. Has it ever occurred to those who thus indulge in such cheap and cruel reflections on some of Her Majesty's most conscientious and laborious subjects, at what an expense to them the work of the great Empire of India is carried on? It is said, and said truly, that the Englishman is pre-eminent among the nations of the earth for his love of *home*! Let it be remembered, then, that it is at the sacrifice of his *home-life* that the Englishman in India earns his, by no means, immoderate and ever-decreasing income.

To the child, fortunate in her care-takers, however, the filial sentiment will often go far to supply the impulse withdrawn by the absence of her parents, and this sentiment may become a powerful factor in the formation of her character. As time and distance obliterate their actual memory, so will their fancied image gain in charm and beauty. Should there be no adverse influence at work, each one's ideal of her own parents will be that which, in her estimation, combines all that is most perfect in man or woman.

The mere memory of a dead mother, as in the case of Cowper, will influence more powerfully the character of one man than the actual presence and existence of his own, that of another. Ideality in the case of the former, be his imagination and sentiment ever so strong, runs no risk of rude comparison with fact. Not so with the

Indian girl separated for long years from her parents. As advancing time brings the hour of reunion nearer, the ardent temperament of youth will constantly add in glowing tints, new touches to the original picture. And the moment of meeting will be rehearsed with an intensity of effect known only to the roseate atmosphere of a young girl's affection.

The other evil to which the inevitable separation exposes both parent and child, is that of *indifference*. Endowed with less imagination and consequently more at the mercy of her immediate surroundings, another girl will attach herself more easily to those with whose kindness she is in daily contact. As the time approaches for her rejoining her parents, her anticipations will perhaps largely partake of the nature of presentiment. Not without distrust can she view a life, in itself unknown, which is to be passed with beings, who, although the authors of her existence, are in all essentials strangers, and for all she can know, may prove unsympathetic.

Crucial tests these of the strength of natural ties. The results in either direction are not difficult to foresee. In the first place, the parents must be brought face to face with that preconceived ideal, and the happiness of the family will greatly depend on the result of the ordeal. They either stand or fall. If the latter, great will be the fall, and the influence on the young life for which they are responsible, disastrous. Like a boat loosed from its moorings, her mind and conscience will be tossed and battered about, between duty to her parents and that higher moral standard, which the whole course of her training may have helped to build up. Their faults and failings to which daily use would have blunted her perceptions, will be painfully obvious should she have been religiously brought up; any defect in reverence of faith, will come as a terrible shock. If she has learnt to look upon life as the battle ground for good against evil, and vanity, frivolity, idleness have hitherto been regarded as baneful vices, what must be her reflexions, if from the day her outfit became an all-absorbing question, she finds the duties of the toilet erected into a religion; and arrayed in garments of a variety and richness to which she has hitherto been a stranger, she finds that "looking well," is for the future to be one of the chief aims of her existence. If instead of that *vie intime* to which she has taught herself, with infinite yearnings, to look forward, she finds her life mapped out in an

endless cycle of engagements:—and dancing, theatricals, lawn-tennis, badminton, &c., and its all important pre-occupations,—what must be, we ask, the reflexions of a thoughtful girl? and ere she can accommodate herself to an ephemeral existence such as this, what must be the revolution of which her own bosom is perhaps the only witness?

Bewildered, puzzled, hesitating, must we not, looking with painful anxiety on the mass of our countrywomen in India, picture her, as letting slip, one by one, her nobler impulses, the untested principles of a schoolgirl's code, and as half unwillingly but surely, gliding down the current? Soon the waters of fashionable life will engulf her; anon she will be in their vortex, and if, in the evermore rarely recurring moments of quiet reflexion, she pauses to ask whither she is tending, must not her scruples be easily laid to rest if she find her father, her mother, her friends look on approving, if not even participating? Must not her natural conclusion be, that her earlier impressions of life and duty, were a tradition of puritanism, and that to laugh, to dance, to sing, to beguile time, and to chase dull cares, these are the true objects a woman has to seek,—the end and aim of her being?

But underneath this seemingly gay surface, she will, by imperceptible degrees, discover a more serious underlying stratum. No one will perhaps hint it in words, but is not this sentiment in the very air she breathes? Reluctantly she discovers that the chief duty of girlhood is to secure a good match. Her friends and companions are passing one by one into bridehood, and the wisdom or the reverse of their choice is discussed with a reckless freedom before her, that once she would have felt bordered on the indelicate. Verily, she will find that she, who in the matrimonial market doeth well to herself, will in India be well spoken of. Not the tender daughter, the loving sister, the studious modest girl will be the theme of station applause. If she, too, is not to be considered by all, parents included, a failure, must she not bethink herself of fulfilling their unexpressed ambition, by securing an eligible *parti*? The least sophisticated, cannot long mix in Indian society without early learning wherein success or failure lies for her. And the bloom and sacredness from her sweet maidenhood seems brushed away, when she inadvertently hears herself referred to as one of a list of unsuccessful "*spins*" who has not yet "*gone off*."

Can we wonder if she takes the plunge and becomes, with the

rest, the devotee of dissipation, and her modest, retiring manners are exchanged for their reverse? Her ambition is now to be a skilful lawn-tennis player, a good dancer, a brilliant fabricator of chaff—chaff being the staple commodity of Indian conversation! She now chaffs with the best, and her admirers speak of her as “awfully jolly.” Probably, a season or two will land her in a new home. Her husband, engaged in his office for all the long hours of the sultry Indian day, time will soon begin to hang heavily on her hands. Confined by the necessities of the climate for its greater length within the four walls of her home, she will soon long for the freedom and excitement of scenes of amusement! She will recoup herself for the dreary hours of imprisonment by snatching all the liberty she can in those of emancipation. When the hot weather has laid its veto on station festivities, she will long to follow in fashion’s wake, and recommence its monotonous round upon the hills. Her husband distressed to see her “mope,” and anxious for her health, will easily be persuaded, even if he does not originate the idea, that the plains do not suit his wife in the hot weather. In this way, the Indian husband shows great unselfishness. Condemned by the exigencies of the public service and of his private purse, to remain below in the melting heat, he resigns himself to six months of celibacy, and takes what consolation he can find out of life in his club, which alone offers him a resource against the intolerable loneliness of his home. A semi-estrangement, or at least indifference, springs up. Husband and wife have learnt to seek their pleasures apart. A “home” if it can bear the name, whence the presiding genius of home,—the wife and mistress is absent half the year,—is at best a hollow pretence. The taking for “better and worse” has on one side become a broken compact. To take for the better, viz., the cool weather—to forsake for the *worse*, the hot—has become the order of the day.

Happy, if that were all. But is it possible that the detached better-half will content herself with a sad and solitary existence on the hills? Her work, her place in the social circle abandoned, is she not in terrible danger of seeking out consolations? Other idlers than herself will be on the hills also. What more alluring than the charm and excitement of flirtation without its possibilities and risks? Besides, can one see one’s friend’s wife ride and walk, unchaperoned, when one has nothing better, certainly not more agreeable to do than accompany her?

Is this the life an English mother would covet for her child? Is this the ideal of the fresh young maiden whose errant thoughts, straying into the dim future, picture a life of mutual sympathy and affection with that unknown one, to share whose lot and to bear whose burdens she will be ever ready. Could such a woman be brought face to face with her future as above depicted, and see her likeness there, and were some seer, as of old, to pronounce on her the sentence "Thou art the woman," might we not hear her indignant rejoinder as she disclaims it and asks: "*Am I a dog?*"

There is the next, but less common type, viz., the young lady of riper years and experience, who comes either married or perhaps single to cheer a brother's lonely bungalow, and share the ups and downs of his career. She may at home have been a visitor of the poor, a Sunday-school teacher, or leader of a village choir. It has not occurred that such pursuits may be all but impracticable in India. On the contrary, she rather comes seeking a wider sphere, a less beaten track for her energies. She is at the prime of her zeal, her enthusiasm, and her health.

The gradual chill of disappointment creeping into the heart of such an one, may be easily divined. Obstacles of which she could have no previous conception spring up in her path at every turn. The climate, the difficulties of locomotion, the absence of that parochial machinery which offers to innumerable ladies of active and philanthropic tendencies in England, an easy and well worn path of usefulness, are wholly absent. Poor, there are none; nor perhaps children to instruct. At least between her and the only poor she sees, the natives, a gulf is fixed, for they cannot understand her, nor she them.

She will then, perhaps, bethink herself of learning the language, but here again new difficulties await her. She applies to her male protector, expressing her desire for the services of a Moonshi or a Pundit. To her surprise her apparently reasonable request is far from favorably received. Many Englishmen have an insuperable objection to the ladies of their families having intercourse of any kind with natives: their plea is, that natives regard woman from so low a standpoint. It is quite possible that they do so regard the women of their own nation, whom their customs have systematically degraded for centuries; but the revelation has possibly never been made to them, of what generations of religious and moral culture, has done for the ladies of the West. But it is

undeniable that this feeling, well grounded or otherwise, has proved a serious impediment in the way of numerous ladies intelligently studying native tongues. Thwarted in this direction she takes her Primer and commences to study alone. Her progress is slow and unsatisfactory: but she has been told that "if bent on learning the language, which she had much better let alone, he himself, husband or brother, will help her." Making the best of circumstances she struggles on, but soon discovers that, immersed from morning till evening in business, he has little inclination for a drill in language, or the meagre mental relaxation to be found in dictionaries and grammars during his few hours of repose.

Thus, by degrees, her abortive efforts are abandoned, and the key which might indeed have opened before her many closed doors of usefulness, is let slip from her hand. This type is too sensible, too cultivated, to subside into the mere votary of station dissipation. She reads, studies, and is often missing at the general rendezvous. Indian society is impatient of revolt from its dominion. To be well with her, you must let yourself be led captive at her will. On lawn-tennis nights you must not be found wending your way in an opposite direction. It is expected of you that bat in hand you should converge to the general centre! On the night of a station ball, it is the height of churlishness if you prefer a quiet evening at home. At least, this sort of thing cannot be allowed to recur too often. Very soon, if refractory, you will find yourself confronted with the cold shoulder, and when you enter among your compeers, you will at once discover you are not *au courant*. Every body is discussing the last ball, the last theatricals, or the approaching tournament. You were not there? You are not going to join? "C'est bien assez."

Ladies of a studious and thoughtful turn are not so rare in India as they have been. But they are still sufficiently so to find their social position far from happy. She, who is a reader or thinker, when she enters society, at a loss perhaps on the all-absorbing topic of the hour—the last tournament—or the coming Race week, has nevertheless her own contribution to bring to the general fund. But, alas! these other ladies neither read nor think. Their tongues are indeed ready with airy nothings: and in the society they frequent, such airy nothings are the staple commodity of conversation. The discussion of politics, social reforms, literature, still more religion is decidedly in "bad form." There is,

indeed, plenty of chaff, but of wheat and the heavier crops, butterflies in general have but a poor opinion! They savour too much of the market and the corn exchange when one has nothing to exchange.

The third class may be looked for among the many charming girls who come out as brides. They may belong eventually to either of the preceding classes, but there is a certain difference in their way of looking at or accepting Indian life. Unlike the first they have no Indian *traditions*: "Bara Mem Sahib" and "Chota Mem Sahib" are still terms for them without meaning. They have not found out that the dearly prized prerogative of the one is to patronize, and the first duty of the other is to obey! No early association has robbed the freshness of a new country and new surroundings of their charm. Young love has not brushed the bloom from its petals, and her husband by her side, she gazes at the unknown with a tender interest, for this is the home of his adoption, and she too is ready to adopt it as her own. Not all at first does she awake to the monotony, the soullessness of the eternal round of society engagements. Early motherhood, perhaps, is in the near horizon, and the sanctity of bridehood, still throws its glamour around her. The youngest addition is herself a welcome ingredient, for she affords a fresh topic for discussion. The frailties of the Jones and Smiths are, alas! worn threadbare. All the rents and fissures in the domestic and social relationships of every one in the station, are common property. Is Mrs. Primptemps Verts pretty, or can she be merely said to be good looking? Here, in itself, is a subject which will occupy several sittings ere each and every lady will have aired her own, and refuted her neighbour's opinions. Who was she? Has she any money? Some think her very young, but another is nearly certain she is not as young as she seems. Some one has heard that she sings, another is equally sure she merely plays. But a third, better informed, knows positively she does neither.

Mrs. Primptemps Verts will find herself very well received! Each lady will be bent on being better informed than her neighbour as to her tastes and antecedents, when the station meets at the next lawn-tennis party, perhaps the awakening may in her case be long in coming, but it will come at last. How different this life from that of her English home! How dearly her love is purchased! She clings passionately to husband and child, but the

cloud of early separation darkens her sky. Soon it will be the choice between that husband and that child. She knows where her's will fall, but she sees herself in the not distant future—a Rachel weeping for her children, uncomforted, because they are not, nor can be, where she is. She asks herself with deep heart-sinkings, how she will spend all the long sad days, when separated perforce by the necessities of his position from her husband, the walls and verandahs of her empty bungalow echoing no longer to the pattering feet and ringing laugh of her children, she will find herself alone.

Her heart involuntarily tells her the only salve to her sorrow would be a life of benevolent activity in the service of others. How many aching hearts have stilled their throbbings by ministering to those yet sadder than themselves. She will devote her life to useful or philanthropic pursuits. As one hails the flickering blaze of the lighthouse across a troubled sea, so does she welcome this glimmering hope. By living for others her own life may escape shipwreck. But how shall she accomplish her desires? If in a heart-crisis such as this, a woman turns for help to her male companion, ten to one she gets small comprehension, little sympathy, still less will he aid her. That imperative demand for work on which he makes his manhood's boast, appears to him unreasonable, if not importunate, when coming from the other sex. His pride and his prerogative is to work for her, and beyond a little ladylike supervision of his domestic arrangements, the part he would assign to her in life is too generally that of an onlooker. Can we wonder that so many sink into a life of inanition, varied only by an occasional flare up into the intoxication of pleasure, if this is the view taken by their protectors. A man will tell you that as long as he is hard at work the inconveniencies, not to say the miseries of the climate sit on him comparatively lightly: but that the moment his attention and thoughts are unemployed, time becomes intolerably heavy. Why should we suppose that the mere difference of sex should so completely alter the character and predilections of beings of otherwise the same race and traditions, that what is utter weariness to the one, should be a satisfying existence to the other? No: we do our countrywomen the justice to believe that much of that apparent devotion to frivolity and amusement that so painfully characterises their Indian existence, is the result of misdirected energy: they having found, too often, every other field for its

exercise practically closed against them.

But then it is argued a woman's sphere is in attending to her house-keeping and her children. Let it be distinctly understood that all our preceding remarks refer almost exclusively to the unmarried, the childless, and the married ladies whose children no longer call for their care. To her whose children still share her home and her maternal tenderness, we can hardly too strenuously insist on the sacredness of the trust of motherhood, nor the absorbing nature of its claims. A task more difficult, nor one requiring more unremitting self-devotion than that of rearing our Anglo-Indian children, does not exist. In India everything is against them. Delicate exotics, they languish and pine beneath these sultry skies, these scorching winds, this death-dealing sun. Hours of infancy, by nature ordained to be hours of joy and innocent delight, are here too often but one weary martyrdom of sickness and misery. If ever motherhood deserved the dignity of being recognised as a *mission*, requiring all the exclusiveness of enthusiasm and of self-devotion, it is in India. Here is needed the vigilant eye to mark the earliest symptoms of disorder, as well as to ward off the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the arrow that flieth by noonday. So great are her difficulties, so bright are the rewards of a faithful discharge of her duties, so disastrous are the results of neglect, that the English mother in India might well aspire to rank as a queen among mothers. For faithfulness or neglect mean to her offspring the enjoyment or the forfeiture of what comes to them but once, and the memory of which will be the fairest heritage of age, a *happy childhood*. Who can have failed to mark the difference, perceptible at a glance, between the neat, trim, chubby English child in India, smiles on its lips and dimples in its cheek as it sits complaisant and content in its ayah's arms or trots cheerily by her side, and the pale, listless infant, with flabby spotty skin, tasteless ill fitting garments, eloquent of the skill of the native *durzie*, dragging its weary footsteps along the dusty roads. In the one you see the mother's darling, in the other the offspring of the woman of fashion, who, dancing or acting by night and sleeping by day, finds full occupation for her few industrial hours in refurbishing old costumes and concocting new ones, to meet the incessant demands of toilet consequent on her constant appearances in public. This sad and listless child, innocent victim of the violation of Nature's laws, abandoned by its natural protectors to the tender mercies of

ignorant and irresponsible native servants, will retain no reminiscences of its early home, but of dreary recurrences of fever and of colds, of mosquito bites and of prickly-heat. As its mind expands, its sufferings begetting fretfulness, it will revenge the neglect of its parent by acts of cruelty and petty tyranny on its caretakers, and when eventually deported to England, will be but another example of that already much deprecated creature—the passionate, mischievous and ill-behaved Indian child.

We think that we have in nowise overrated the trials, the drawbacks, the difficulties that beset the path of the Englishwoman in India: In our next paper we hope to deal more fully with her influence and her responsibility. We will enter into the question whether her present position is the highest or the happiest to which she might reasonably aspire. We shall ask whether there are insuperable obstacles to her life rising to at least a level with the lives of our noblest and best at home. Among whom, in their pure and lofty lives, our Queen's daughters shine conspicuous; and in their active devotion to works of mercy and benevolence, call on England's daughters to be true to the traditions of their race, their ennobling faith, and the honour of the great nation whom they represent.

J. E. Dawson.

Part II.

THE ENGLISHWOMAN IN INDIA: HER INFLUENCE AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

There are but few, we venture to think, of those assisting to carry on, in its various branches, the Government of this great country, who are not oppressed, if even only occasionally, by a sense of the magnitude of the undertaking, and who do not, in a greater or minor degree, recognise their own share in their country's responsibilities. Recognised or not, these are in fact enormous. Collectively and individually the trust that has been reposed in us of shaping the destinies of India's millions, is a tremendous one, nor need we doubt that a very large proportion of our civilians and other officers are alive to the fact, and bring to the discharge of their work an energy and zeal as well as earnestness of purpose, for

which perhaps a parallel can scarcely be found in history. Compared with the conquering nations of the past, whether for the mildness of its administration, the purity of its intentions, and the equal justice that it seeks to deal to all classes as well as races, and to every creed alike, the rule of the English in India stands out on the page of history as a phenomenon that really appears unique. We are inclined sometimes to wonder in reading the criticisms of the native press, notably of the Bengalee Babu,³ on the Government to which he is entirely indebted for his very ability to write, by what previous training he has sought to qualify himself to pronounce an opinion on so remarkable a problem. Has he acquainted himself with the histories of the great dynasties that have in turn overshadowed and trodden in the dust the nations of the earth? Is he familiar with Egyptian, Assyrian and Roman history? Has he enquired how the monuments they have left to posterity were erected? Has he marked the tracks of the conquerors of the ancient world, their ruthless indifference to human misery, and the waste of human life that ministered to their glory? These are the data from which his conclusions are to be drawn, and not from the ideas of liberty, borrowed at second hand, which the English have known how to win for themselves by centuries of dogged perseverance and endurance. His comparisons must be drawn between the India of the past and of that of to-day, and of nations wearing a foreign yoke in past ages. It is sometimes laid to our charge as a reproach, that were we to leave India to-morrow no trace of our presence would remain a century hence. Rather let us take this as a high testimony to the disinterestedness of our rule. Not great and useless monuments, wrung out of the groans and sweat of a down trodden people have we given India. But works of practical utility, such as roads, railroads, and canals, by which her internal resources may be developed, and the evils of drought and famine minimized as far as practicable. In addition we have secured to harrassed and distressed millions the inestimable blessings of peace within their borders, and we think our Bengalee friend would be better employed in studying the past history of Hindoostan, and comparing it with the present, than in inditing wordy diatribes on subjects of which at present he appears to be profoundly ignorant.

³ A term used to describe a *nouveau riche* Indian native who sought to adopt British customs.

While, however, the Indian official is honestly striving to further the objects of a philanthropic Government in benefiting its people, he must not fall into the error of imagining that it is only by his more public functions that he can exert a beneficent influence. Physical prosperity is, after all, but an item in human happiness: and it must be by its moral results that the success of our administration must be judged. The Englishman in India is closely watched, and his character keenly canvassed, not alone in public, but in private life equally. It is by that silent atmosphere with which each man unconsciously surrounds himself, the tone of his thought and life, the influence of his personality, that he will in reality mould, for good or evil, his Hindoo 'brother:' and it is in failing to grasp the importance of this truth that our great danger lies. The value of truth and rectitude, of honour and honesty, we are all apt to recognise; but gentleness, kindness, consideration and sympathy, are graces we seem often in danger of underrating, and of seeing ourselves surpassed, at least in outward seeming, by our darker fellow subjects: these are, however, qualities the more careful cultivation of which would be fruitful in happy results in our intercourse with Hindoos of every grade. One cannot help observing, with more or less amusement or regret, that an era of imitation has set in: and this tendency, flattering as it may be considered, must often engender in us the wish, that our imitators could mingle with their emulation of our customs, more discrimination as to what is really admirable.

There are, however, points on which we think we are fairly entitled to claim indisputable superiority: and among these we place in distinct relief our domestic institutions. When we find on a great occasion that a picked elite of ten thousand of our countrymen and women are moved to tears at the sympathetic rendering by one woman's voice of the popular little song "Home, Sweet Home," we must feel convinced that both the sentiment and the music appealed to one of the strongest and most deep rooted of our national passions. Must not such a spectacle have offered a profound problem to foreign visitors—especially strangers from this country? We pride ourselves much, as Teutons, that to us alone belongs that sweet and magic word—"Home—Heim!" On no other race can it exert so potent a spell! Thus, looking out on our Hindoo friends, we draw a contrast wholly to our own advantage. Our highest sensibilities are shocked by the thought that two

young lives should be irrevocably united long before they are, or can be, capable of appreciating the gravity of the event. We feel not only that thus manhood is robbed of one of its most sacred rights—the right of choice,—but we are painfully oppressed by the sense of the possibility of happiness precluded, and of misery entailed, by such a custom; and, in her enforced marriage being denied a voice in the disposal of her own hand, the fate of the little Hindoo bride appears to us pathetic. Again it is with something akin to horror that we shrink from the thought, that so large a proportion of our fellow subjects should be doomed, without a hearing, to the same fate, imprisonment for life—which our laws reserve for our blackest criminals: her only crime being the involuntary one of being born a woman! We cannot wonder at the perversion of maternal love, that leads so many to seek an outlet from their own hard lot for their innocent babes, and renders the crime of infanticide so awfully common as it is. In the same way all that is best in us awakes in indignant protest against the fate which inexorable custom, in its stern relentlessness, has decreed for the Indian widow.

That a being, perhaps, still in the artless innocence of childhood,⁴ or in the earliest bloom of maidenhood, or perhaps at the very moment when the hope of maternity is awakening for the first time her heart to rapture, should fall under this terrible blight, and be doomed to a lifelong penance more rigorous than that set up by the most bigotted of ascetics, thrills us with horror. Nor can we wonder at the eagerness with which the young and ardent widow embraced her only chance of escape from her misery, *viz.*, the brief but for her glorious agony of Suttee.⁵ We, ourselves, can

⁴ It is well known that it is still far from unusual to *betroth* (which with the Hindoo is equivalent to marriage—being not only irrevocable but precluding *re-marriage*) their young daughters at any age ranging from 8 years to 12. Many cases might be cited of little girls of still tenderer age having been given in marriage. It is thus obvious that widowhood may often occur in mere infancy. That it does so is evident from the fact, that it is decreed that the widow's *fast*, need not be enforced till the child is eight or nine years old! [Dawson's note]

⁵ The Hindu religious practice of *sati* involved a recently widowed woman sacrificing herself (whether voluntarily or involuntarily) on her husband's funeral pyre. British missionaries campaigned against the practice, and *sati* was officially outlawed in India in 1829.

only marvel that all that a beneficent and enlightened Government has been able to do on her behalf, is to close to her this, her sole door of hope, and leave her the helpless victim of a fate, than which none more harshly cruel has ever stained a nation's annals. The Hindoo widow is as practically beyond the reach of the law, as the Pariah dog of which, in her degradation, she is but the human antitype. Hunger, thirst and weariness are her lifelong companions. In sickness, as one under the bann of the gods, none will tend her: in health, she is the despised drudge. In the midst of the family, she lives alone, shunned and unpitied. When at last starvation, sickness, and sorrow have done their work, and she gathers up her poor shrivelled form to die on the cold stone floor, none will weep for her or lament!

These facts hem us in, their evidences confront us, on every side. Each time we drive abroad we are reminded of them. Those luxurious equipages that crowd our maidens or public promenades⁶ are filled, we observe, with native gentlemen only. Yet we know that by Hindoo law they are each and all compelled to marry, many of them doubly and trebly! "Where, then, we may well ask are their wives? Where their daughters, their sisters? After the weary, stifling hours of a tropical summer's day, have the swift drive in the cool evening air, the softened tints of sunset skies, the mingled perfumes from a thousand flowering shrubs, no charm for them? Is it the men only who appreciate these delights?" To argue thus, would be to misapprehend completely the situation. In some cases, of these familiar things the secluded zenana lady can form no conception; in others she retains only the faint impressions of infancy. From the hour of her marriage she has been as dead to the world around, and the world to her, as ever nun within her cloistered cell!

Or, again, we pass some huge unwieldy conveyance. Not only are its doors and windows hermetically sealed, but it is entirely shrouded in a cotton pall. It is, indeed, but a hearse for the living. It is guarded jealously on every side, and the uninitiated might easily mistake it for a convoy of desperate criminals on their way to the gallows. It is however merely a native lady journeying from one of her husband's residences to another. Of the scenes through

⁶ In this respect Bombay forms a noble exception to many other provinces in India, Parsee and Marhatta ladies, taking their full share in the pleasures and recreations of society [Dawson's note].

which she is passing she is as completely ignorant as when immured in the seclusion of the zenana, and we must conclude that only centuries of habit could enable her, with her companions and attendants cooped up with her, to survive the deprivation of breathing space to which they are necessarily subjected during the dangerous transit. But it may with reason be asked, what is the connection of all this with the immediate subject of this paper? We hope to be able to shew that it bears to it a very close relation, When we remember that it is among a people of whom these are a few of the accredited customs, that our exotic homes are planted, may we not infer that the immense contrast between our respective social and domestic institutions must be one of the earliest reflections forced on the minds of our Hindoo friends, when admitted, as they now are, in numberless instances, to a sufficient degree of intimacy to afford them this opportunity. Can their amazement be inferior to our own, at the different position occupied by the ladies of our families, at their freedom from restraint, their culture, their education? And observing to them so astonishing a phenomenon, may we not suppose that a very rigid comparison is likely to be set up between our respective systems. What if the future of India's women is but waiting on the verdict given? What if the only advocate, on behalf of these silent millions, be the unsuspected influence of the lives and characters of their more privileged English sisters? The thoughtful reader can pursue to its legitimate conclusion this reflection: it would seem to throw around the lives of Anglo-Indian ladies a significance startling in its gravity. The levity of modern thought has substituted, for the good old fashioned phase, man's *helpmate*, that of his "better-half." The idea that a wife was a fellow worker with her husband, taking up and sharing with him cheerfully the burdens of life, would appear to be somewhat exploded, the modern idea seeming to favour the supposition of her being but an elegant and somewhat costly appanage. We think woman occupied the more honorable and dignified position, when in good old Saxon and scriptural phrase, she regarded herself as indeed his helpmate. Nor shall we do her such injustice as to doubt that a vast number cling to the ancient ideal. For their benefit we might then suggest the following inference. If husbands or Englishmen generally hold themselves deeply responsible for the good of India, can their wives or Englishwomen possibly believe, that with them none of this

responsibility rests? If the men are helping, or retarding by their influence and example, India's progress, must not woman be doing the like though perhaps within a narrower sphere? And if we are persuaded that our own moral standards and beliefs are as far in advance of Hindoo standards as our religion is in advance of Hinduism, is it not natural to suppose that the native, who knows little or nothing of either theoretically, will draw his own conclusions as to their value, from the interpretations he reads in our lives. The Englishman and the Englishwoman alike, will wittingly or unwittingly, embody, to the native mind that standard of moral excellence which we owe; to centuries of possession of the purest faith that has ever blessed mankind. We believe there are still very many in high, as well as in less influential places, who would not willingly place stumbling blocks in the way of those, who, finding the beliefs of ages slipping from their grasp beneath the inexorable facts of positive knowledge, and yet appreciating the disastrous results to nations as to individuals of the loosening of all faith, and the drifting of society amid the wreck and chaos of all creeds, would naturally turn with an intelligent interest to examine the claims of that religion which has been introduced among them by the nation which, along with her scriptures, has brought to them the blessings of justice and of peace. Yet such must surely be the result if the higher mandates of our religion are practically discredited in our lives: and it is a danger to which our women as well as our men are exposed. Each Englishwoman, in her own Bungalow, is the centre of an influence, and the cynosure of an argus-eyed criticism, even to her most insignificant acts, to which her English life offers no parallel. The smallest establishment will contain from ten to a dozen, the larger, from a dozen to twenty or thirty servants. With every one of these the *Mem Sahib* is more or less in contact, and the happiness and comfort of their lives depends largely on her supervision. From her they receive their orders, and very often their pay, and they recognise the link to the *breadgiver* in a way that, to her, is sometimes, to say the least droll, and address her, not unfrequently, as at once "their *father and mother*." Can it be believed that it is not within her power, in the immediate circle of her own dependants, to do an infinity of good? When it is remembered that they are from infancy lapped in ignorance and prejudice; that of what we understand by moral training they have had none; and what to them stands for religion

is gross superstition; surely here alone is scope for all her energies and faculties. Yet how many, we would sorrowfully ask, have recognised the trust Providence has placed in their hands? What is done by the English mistress to dispel the ignorance, combat the superstition, raise the moral tone, or replace by instruction in the tenets of a nobler faith, the degrading superstitions of her household? To this reproach the usual reply is, "Oh! I do not know enough of the language to do more than just give ray orders." In saying this she furnishes indeed a reason, but one can scarcely say an excuse. The Hindee or Urdu languages offer absolutely no difficulties to the student that any lady of ordinary linguistic ability may not easily overcome. And were it once acknowledged or admitted that no lady can be a good mistress, even in the ordinary sense of the word, without a knowledge of the vernacular, we are convinced that not a few would, with the spirit and energy for which our countrywomen when aroused are so conspicuous, tackle a difficulty that a little perseverance on their part could so easily overcome. Almost all have spent years of study in acquiring European languages: yet to not a few the advantages of these acquisitions are purely theoretical. But to the lady in India, Hindoostanee is the language in which she is compelled to conduct her domestic affairs for the best part of her life. What is worth doing at all, is worth doing well, is a wise if homely axiom, which with advantage might here be applied. If speaking the language be a necessity, why not do it well, that is to say grammatically, idiomatically, but above all intelligibly? We are convinced our English ladies can have little idea of the distressing effect on the ear of that peculiar lingo with which they address their servants, and which may not inaptly be compared to the *pigeon* English of the Chinaman. Nor can this be matter of surprise since they will generally volunteer the information, that it has been acquired by the mysterious process of "picking up!" At the risk of being tedious, we venture to quote another homely saying, that in this as in other things we fear there is no royal road to knowledge, and that the more usual method of giving it a little study will unquestionably be productive of happier results!

We might, as an inducement to try the latter method, hold out to them the hope, that half their domestic difficulties will disappear with the process. Our Hindoo servants are certainly a little exasperating occasionally; but if only the fair "Cherisher of the

poor" could know the precise nature of the order she issued, when honestly *intending* something quite different, she would certainly be less surprised, and probably much less indignant, at the unexpected results! Rather, we might say, her indignation would be amusingly diverted. Our servants are not brutally indifferent to our displeasure, nor, as a rule, desirous of contravening us. We should not greatly err, if we conclude that when our orders are misinterpreted, a considerable margin was left for the imagination in the way they were given. It must be observed that very many mistresses in India indulge in a tone of irritation and command when addressing their native servants, that would not be tolerated by our household servants at Home. The evil is to be deplored, though not inexcusable. The strain on nerve and temper of the climate is often intense, and when to this is superadded an apparently dogged obtuseness in taking in her orders, exasperation is apt to explode in a way that must cause much after humiliation and self reproach. The habit of giving full and clear instructions to servants on the nature and manner of the duties expected of them, which is impossible where the command of the language is defective, would do much towards remedying this regrettable tendency and with the linguistic difficulties, the other impediments to a mild and gentle, yet firm régime, would be minimized if not altogether disappear.

Great scope for all that is most loveable and best in woman maybe realized within her own compound. Her dominion is a conglomerate not of individuals as in England, but of families. Cases of sickness will arise where medicines, nourishing food, and a little sympathetic interest will go a long way to win confidence and gratitude. There will be quite a little tribe of children growing up around her, in whose education she may interest herself: and, if at all gifted in that way, by herself forming a little Verandah School, she may do much to mould the rising generation. The experiment has been tried with encouraging success of assembling the servants, so disposed, on Sundays for religious instruction. When it is fully understood that no privileges or disabilities are incurred by attendance or non-attendance, which should be entirely optional, it will be found that all creeds and castes will readily join in a simple service of prayer and song to a common Creator, and listen with great interest to Bible histories intelligibly rendered.

These simple suggestions, with others that will readily occur to

each individual mind, will add a zest to domestic administration, and will tend to weld into one community the servants of our families, giving to them and us a bond of kindly feeling and good will, that we are quite sure would go far to reconcile many an English lady in India to the unhomelike surroundings of her domicile. She will feel the internal satisfaction that her life is not barren of practical benefit to those around her; and though still exposed to occasional disappointments, she will, by the course we have indicated, gradually attract and keep a superior class of attached servants, who are far from indifferent to the consideration and the repose they meet with in a well ordered establishment.

The advantage of having acquired a good conversational knowledge of the language will be no less keenly realized by the lady, who desires to do, graciously and with dignity, the honours to her husband's guests, who, thus received, will always appreciate the privilege of being admitted to intercourse with the female members of his family. What can be more melancholy than the spectacle of an English lady in her own drawing-room unable to exchange ten consecutive ideas with natives of rank and distinction, and therefore reduced to silence or dumb show? Her visitor, no less embarrassed than herself, can carry away no other impression than that the ideas of the Sahib's better-half, notwithstanding her greater opportunities, are as circumscribed as those of his own in the zenana; and in comparing the two, may be inclined to prefer the gracious complaisance of the latter, to what to him appears the distant and haughty reserve of the former. This is in fact the case. Very frequently have we heard the native nobles of our acquaintance remark—"So-and-so is a very nice lady; she is so kind in her manner, and she understands our language. When we converse with her we are quite delighted, and come away improved and encouraged. Mrs. So-and-so is also very nice: but she cannot speak our language, and we feel ashamed and embarrassed. Some ladies also make us feel that they look down on us too much to enter into conversation with us."

One more instance amongst many, where a knowledge of the language would be found of essential importance, we will venture on suggesting. As the houses of the native gentry are more and more thrown open to the zenana teacher, a great and increasing desire is evinced by their inmates to receive the visits of English ladies. Their eagerness is, in fact, sometimes touching. It is as if the

caged bird, who has never tried its wing, invited its feathered compeer to alight but for a few seconds on its narrow home, and reveal to it some of the secrets of the universe from personal contact with which it is for ever debarred. It is to be hoped that English ladies will widely respond to this desire. Not only may they in this way give valuable help to those who have undertaken the arduous task of carrying, within the narrow compass of their homes, the light of knowledge, but they would encourage their pupils in their hardly less difficult one, of ascending the steep ladder of learning. To do this effectually, it is, however obvious, that a knowledge of their language is essential. The eagerness with which the Indian lady will ply with questions her English visitor, will in itself sufficiently demonstrate how unsatisfactory to both parties would prove a visit passed in silence.

The few hints we have given will, it is hoped, fully suffice to shew that there is ample inducement to the earnest minded to study and master the language of the country. It has been truly said, "our knowledge of men and things is in proportion to the number of languages we have acquired." In India the principle holds equally good. Ignorance of the language means ignorance of the people, and ignorance of the people, if it be productive of no positive harm, must at least render attempts at good abortive: but where knowledge and good will go hand in hand, the good within the scope of all cannot be overrated.

Female education at home is making prodigious strides: it may almost be said to be keeping pace with education in all its various branches. It seems impossible, but that sooner or later it must raise the tone of Indian society. It can hardly be, and it is to be devoutly hoped for, that men of so high a culture as our civilians and others, will long rest satisfied with companionship for life with those whose soul dwells in dress, lawn-tennis, or the waltz.⁷ The importance attached to the first of these cannot fail to strike the thoughtful observer of its phenomena, any more than the variety and richness of the costumes. One would naturally conclude that

⁷ It must not be supposed that we quarrel with these recreations in moderation and in their place. What we object to, is that they should be raised into a place of importance they are not entitled to, and be regarded not as the recreations of existence, but as its objects [Dawson's note].

the majority of Government officials were enormously wealthy, and that after all there was a wide foundation for the prevalent opinion, that their lives are passed in unbounded luxury. Yet, a closer inspection will often lead to the bewildering conclusion, that very often the costliness of a lady's dress, is in inverse ratio to her husband's income. It is not the *bari* but the *choti* Mem Sahib who is most conspicuous for the magnificence of her attire. Failing to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the problem unaided, we referred ourselves to one of these little ladies herself for an explanation, and herewith we furnish the reader, who may have shared our difficulties, with the result.

In a moment of confidence she was bewailing the precarious nature of her husband's profession, and in the event of accident, the fact that "she and her babes would be left on the world to starve without a penny."

We not unnaturally glanced somewhat incredulously at her handsome costume of costly materials.

"Then why on earth are you dressing as you do? The money you spend on your fine clothes would be better laid by to secure at least bread for yourself and your children."

"Oh! You see, everyone dresses so well, and one is looked down upon if one is not a swell as well as the rest! But we are really dreadfully poor, and to tell the truth my dresses are *not paid for*, and I doubt much if ever they will be! We can barely make ends meet, and as a matter of fact, towards the end of the month I never have a rupee in the house. It is quite dreadful: you would hardly believe it!"

"No, indeed, who would, seeing you dressed like this. But what do you do under these distressing circumstances?"

"Oh! I borrow from my Ayah, if she happens to have any money left."

"And if not?"

"Oh! then she pawns her jewellery, and when pay day comes round, I repay her with interest."

What impressed us most in this revelation was the fact, that the finery necessary to keep up our friends self-respect in society was not paid for! If ladies in general were equally frank, we wonder if this would prove to be the missing link in the social problem; and if so, what a train of reflections must follow in its wake?

How many of the ladies of our society are mothers with little

ones far away. If the dresses necessary to feed their vanity are not paid for, where will the far heavier item of travelling expenses be found, which is essential to their restoration to their children? Is the consolation to be found in glorious apparel sufficient to outweigh their maternal instincts? And if their means are inadequate to meet their actual expenditure, how will they be made to fit the possible exigencies of a break down in health of the breadwinner, and many other disasters only less ominous, with which our Indian experience has rendered us but too familiar? As with the depreciation of the rupee, the entire Anglo-Indian community find their incomes steadily decreasing, the duty of rigid economy will become an increasing necessity; and while every other item in domestic expenditure is reduced within its narrowest limits, will that of her personal vanity be the only sacrifice that our Indian lady will refuse to undergo?

Extravagance in dress is telling very imperiously on the matrimonial market. Man, as a rule, is but very slightly impressed with magnificence of toilet, and his masculine mind, when it reflects on the subject at all, will be found to be drawing conclusions very different from those with which his lady friends are crediting him.

Mrs. A. catches the eye of Mr. B. with thoughtful seriousness roaming over the toilet which has cost her husband so many rupees and herself so much anxious concern. She reflects something after this fashion: "Ah! he cannot help admiring my dress: it is really a success; I am quite the best dressed woman in the room!" while in reality his thoughts are somewhat on this wise. "How is it possible that B, on his income, can afford to dress his wife thus? It is quite evident I must give up all thoughts of matrimony. Ladies seem to want so much; and how, on my income barely sufficing for my personal wants, could I risk the chances and responsibilities of marriage!" The influence of dress over the feminine mind and the importance she attaches to it, are problems men find it hard to understand. They do understand and appreciate the importance and implied flattery of ladies trying to look well: and good taste in dress is of equal value with good taste in everything—one's house, one's garden, one's table, but it is something perfectly distinct from extravagance. How low ladies would feel satisfied with simply looking well, if they were not buoyed up with the knowledge that their dress is of actual market-

able value! This feeling is really worth analysing: but it is one on which men are quite at sea!

"Why do you not marry?" we asked a friend who complained loudly of his need of home comfort.

"Marry; my dear fellow, what on earth can a man find in India to marry? Girls now-a-days seem to have but two ideas, their dress and lawn-tennis. What man in his senses would link himself for life to a being who had no soul for any thing else?"

Our friend was severe, but a few of us will perhaps grant he had some shew of reason for his severity. Indian officers are intelligent men, and they naturally seek intelligent companions, and if ladies were to spend but one-half the care in furnishing their minds they do on their persons, they need not fear but that they will be appreciated. They are also naturally, as men who work hard for their living, prudent, and they seek prudent wives, wisely to spend and save their earnings. Many of them are still God-fearing, and they need wives who can partake of their hopes of immortality. Among them are hardworking, home-loving men—and their ideal of bliss is to consort with one to cheer them in health and nurse them in sickness, and who will tend their houses and administer their homes with discretion. All are Englishmen, and they love in their wives what is essentially English, and not that mongrel hybrid of French finery and English dulness into which, alas! it would sometimes appear to be the ambition of our society ladies to transform themselves. Too often their eyes roam over the waste of mindless matter, and they seek their soul's complement in vain. If in the keenness of his disappointment man feels tempted to accept the Arabian prophet's dictum, and deny woman that soul of which she herself seems to deprecate the imputation, can she blame him very severely?

We fear that from the foregoing cursory survey of her influence in her home, on society, and on the native population, the conclusion must, however reluctantly, be arrived at, that in a great majority of instances the women of England have not done justice to the high prestige of their country's position, nor have they very generally been awake to the responsibilities thus entailed. In India, pre-eminently, where as one who as well qualified to judge remarked, "deterioration so rapidly and surely does its work on the moral no less than the physical constitution," woman's influence in initiating what is noble and discouraging what is base, is eminently

needed. Vanity, and the love of display, have too often robbed her of her claim to our reverence; and while her selfish love of ease and pleasure makes many an Indian so-called home but the phantom of its English antitype, to the great work of India's enlightenment she stands in a position of absolute neutrality. Can we exempt her from blame, if the general tone of society is degenerating, if contributions to benevolent objects become ever increasingly scant, and religious enthusiasm seems to die a natural death in the stifling atmosphere of Indian life?

This seems a heavy bill of indictment, but it is for our English sisters to cast the stigma from them by lives devoted to noble ends, and a courageous resolve that neither the enervating influences of climate, shall frighten them from their post of duty by their husband's side on the plains, nor the syren voice of pleasure lure them. The highest lady in the land is leading the van, and now, if ever, will their right to work for India be acknowledged.

We hope we have said enough, on a subject really inexhaustible, not only to stimulate the earnest but also to point the way in which practical usefulness is within the reach of all. To mothers and fathers about to introduce their young unsophisticated daughters to the country, we would fain say one word of advice:—Forewarned is forearmed. You whom experience has taught where the pitfalls for her innocent feet lie, guard her on her first entry into society from its baneful influences. Be ever at her side as she looks out with wistful eye on its living drama, and teach her to discriminate between the evil and the good. Supply her with objects worthy of her interest, at the outset of her career; encourage her to study the language, history, and customs of the races among whom her lot is cast. Foster within her a sense of personal responsibility as regards them. Place within her reach opportunities, and carefully shield her from frivolous companionships. Abstain in her presence from the degrading avariciousness that too often stamps Anglo-Indian conversation, and give her your hearty co-operation in any plan she may originate for good. Make her a sharer in your own pursuits as much as possible, and above all, your personal convictions as to life and duty. Do not degrade her to the level of a spaniel by foolish indulgence, but rather let her learn from your example that pleasure sought as an end is illusive, and ever follows in the wake of faithful devotion to duty.

In this way we think our daughters may cherish a confident ambition that they will prove worthy of their great country, their higher culture, and their ennobling faith. Thus they may aspire to become pioneers not of civilization only, but of religion. And thus they may with hope expect the day when India's daughters as well as sons will, with some shew of reason, call them their "*cherishers*—their "*protectors*" and their "*mothers*."

J. E. Dawson.

**Excerpt from "The Lex Loci; Marriage and Inheritance,"
The Calcutta Review, Vol. 3, 1845, pp. 369-372.**

Again, the *educated* Hindus, Philanthropists of every name, as well as the *Supreme Government* itself are, or ought to be, specially interested in the introduction of a new and improved Law of Inheritance.

How stands the case? By an express Act of the British Parliament in 1813, it is enacted that, "whereas it is *the duty* of this country to promote the interests and happiness of the native inhabitants of the British dominions in India, *such measures ought to be adopted as may tend to the introduction among them of useful knowledge, of religious and moral improvement*: and, in furtherance of the above objects, sufficient facilities ought to be afforded by law to persons desirous of going to and remaining in India, for the purpose of accomplishing those benevolent designs, &c." From the fact, that, in this clause, "religious and moral improvement" is as expressly contemplated and provided for as "the introduction of useful knowledge," it is clear, that our British legislators were prepared to anticipate any possible changes which might arise from the peaceable inculcation of true "religion and morals;" and to regard these changes as the "accomplishment of benevolent designs."

Now then, arising out of the present educational movements of Government itself, not less than the operations of Societies and individuals, *all of them alike sanctioned by the Imperial Parliament*, there is a reason of resistless force and efficacy. This reason has been set forth in the Minute on Indo-British Law, in the following terms:—

"What is the natural—the inevitable effect which must ensue, not merely from the directly evangelizing measures in progress, but

from the success of the Government and other Educational schemes for the enlightenment of this mighty people? From the nature of the component parts of Hinduism—contrasted with the range of European Literature, Science, and Theology—is it not demonstrable, that one grand effect, wherever a high English Education is imparted, will be, the demolition of those errors which constitute at once its basis and superstructure? Is not such abstract or theoretic demonstration borne out by numberless *facts*? Listen to the testimony of one, whose experience and position in native society must invest his assertions with authority. *The Reformer*,—an English newspaper, conducted several years ago by a native Editor of rank, learning and wealth; and the organ of a large and influential body of educated Hindus,—contrasting the *visible* fruits of *ordinary* Missionary exertion with those realized by the Hindu College thus proceeded emphatically to ask:—“Has it (the Hindu College) not been the fountain of a new race of men amongst us? From that institution as from the rock from whence the mighty Ganges takes its rise, a nation is flowing in upon this desert country, to replenish its withered fields with the living waters of knowledge! *Have all the efforts of the missionaries given a tithe of that shock to the superstitions of the people which has been given by the Hindu College?* This at once shews that the means they pursue to overturn the ancient reign of idolatry is not calculated to ensure success, and ought to be abandoned for another which promises better success.”

Without being at all pledged to the accuracy of this *comparative* estimate, must we not hold such a *genuine native testimony* to be conclusive as to the *operative power of a superior English Education in overturning the superstitions and idolatries of India?* If so, must not the Government perceive, into what a predicament of inconsistency it reduces itself, as well as all the friends of Native Education, if the law of inheritance and succession be not speedily ameliorated, and made co-extensive with the wants and exigencies of the entire body of the people? An awakening and enlightening knowledge is communicated which sweeps away the gross absurdities of Idolatry and Superstition from the minds of those who acquire it. In this land, almost all property is left, burdened with *conditions of an idolatrous and superstitious character*. Mark, then, the dilemma into which, in consequence of the Government and other Educational measures, the educated Hindu is brought! *If he performs the*

superstitious or idolatrous conditions, in order to secure his property, he must, by such performance, *do violence to his reason, his conscience, and his publicly avowed sentiments*;—in a word, he *must net the part of a wicked and deceitful hypocrite!* If, on the other hand, he has moral fortitude enough to resist any temptation and suffer any loss rather than submit to the sacrifice of reason, conscience and character, he must, while the law remains unaltered, by his non-fulfilment of the superstitious and idolatrous conditions, *forfeit all right to property*—in a word, as if the acquired possession of superior intelligence were a crime of the first magnitude, he must, in consequence of his being the happy possessor of such intelligence, submit to the infliction of one of the highest penal severities!

But, as there is in human nature an extreme repugnance to the loss of property; and as time will show, that, however much power and wealth may be flattered by the interested and the needy, a course of systematic hypocrisy must eventually call forth the contempt and indignation of an enlightened community;—what may we expect to be the operation of the present law, as it affects the *future spread* of sound knowledge and intelligence among the Natives? What can we expect except that the spread of both will be vastly and indefinitely retarded? What a solemn mockery to be, on the one hand, holding out all manner of encouragements—in the shape of salaries to qualified teachers, and stipends and scholarships to promising students—to stimulate to the pursuit and cultivation of superior knowledge and intelligence:—and on the other, by a continuance of the present law, holding out positive discouragements of a nature too appalling to fail of fatal success! And herein lies the strength of these discouragements. Superior intelligence, *if accompanied by a good conscience*, may become *penal*, by being attended with the deprivation of all one's possessions—and that too, in such trying circumstances as to loss of caste and reputation, that the immediate punishment of death might often be more tolerable. Surely that man knows little of human nature who does not perceive in this, the surest check to all *inquiry*, and the most powerful *restraint* on every *desire* to acquire or cultivate any knowledge which must, without a violation of conscience, issue in such disastrous results. The good things of this life take far too firm a hold of the heart of man, to admit of a different inference being drawn:—yea, such is the strength of that hold which the perishable treasures of this world take of all the powers and

faculties of his soul, that man is not only apt to become insensible to the glories of an eternal inheritance, but apt to listen to any account of them with positive dissatisfaction; and is too often willing to forego the anticipated enjoyments of God's favour, and brave the terrors of God's wrath, rather than be induced on any account, to withdraw the strength of his affections from his present possessions.

If such be the power of opposition which the enjoyment of the good things of this life ever presents to the ready reception of all *truth*,—as opposed to error, prejudice, self-seeking, or sinful compromise—even in circumstances, the most favourable, when no demand is made but the reasonable and salutary demand, not *exclusively* to direct towards them the affections of the heart, but transfer these to a far more glorious and enduring inheritance:—who can estimate the force of resistance, which a mind, pervaded in all its powers by an almost superhuman avarice, must present to the very first proposal, as well as to the incipient desire, practically to embrace any improved system of knowledge—any scheme of unbending principle, whether human or divine—the embracement and tenure of which may involve, irrecoverably, the *total* forfeiture of all that the soul naturally most values? Accurately to estimate the power of such resistance, till the lapse of time and experience have sufficiently illustrated the awful nature of the dilemma, is altogether impossible. But it is very possible, yea, very easy, to perceive how inevitable is the certainty of its existence;—since the slightest consideration will suffice to shew that the supposition of its non-existence would imply, that the usual processes of nature are reversed and the constitution of man unhinged—that actions the most prejudicial to every worldly interest are conducted without a motive, and extraordinary effects produced, either entirely without, or directly contrary to the ordinary operation of natural causes.”

To these remarks we need add nothing farther. Only let the Government of this great empire awake to a full sense of its solemn—its tremendous responsibility—and all may yet go well with us. Among all the functions which it is called on to discharge, there is none more grave or momentous than that of sound legislation and the administration of justice. On its right fulfilment depends, in a pre-eminent degree, the peace, happiness and prosperity, social, civil and domestic, of the millions of the people.

At present, we must make up our minds to the existence of at least three distinct codes of law amongst us—the British, Hindu, and Muhammadan. But, though distinct in some of their general features, and many of their specific details, these need no longer be opposed or contrary in their *essential spirit* or *fundamental principles*. The necessity for distinct codes, in the case of distinct races of people, springs from the obvious consideration, that laws, in order to be practically available and advantageous, must, in their general spirit, shape and complexion, be adapted or conformed to the people for whom they are framed.

Excerpt from Sir John Strachey's *India* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, 1888), pp. 210-215.

With regard to the worship of the gods, the important matter to the mass of the population is the propitiation of the tribal or other deity who attends to the affairs of your own particular caste or occupation, and of the local gods and ghosts and saints and demons who haunt every hill and grove and village. Their names are often unknown, or little cared for, outside the limits of their personal or territorial authority, and their numbers are countless. These powers, for the most part malevolent, go on multiplying or perishing; they are maintained or degraded according to their deserts; frequent miracles, the stream of which in India is never-ending, support the faith of their devotees or transfer it to some new object; and all of them are readily accepted as worthy of veneration or fear by the Brahmans; the gates of the Hindu Pantheon are never shut. These local gods and evil powers are at all times on the alert to resent and punish neglect and disrespect. Little is to be hoped from them, but everything is to be feared. Every disease and every misfortune is more or less dependent on their influence, and the life of the Indian peasant is bound up with the observances required to give a certain amount of security against this ever-present danger.

In the Indian superstitions there is almost always a grotesque element. I will give a few examples of them; they will not necessarily be applicable to any one extensive tract, for custom in regard to these matters is infinitely various, but they will not on

this account be less characteristic.⁸

The most dreaded of the minor deities in Northern India are those who cause special diseases. The smallpox goddess, Sítala, is the eldest and most formidable of seven fatal sisters. She is worshipped by women and children only, and enormous numbers of them attend her shrines. She usually rides on a donkey, and therefore it is proper to give a feed of grain at her shrine to the donkey of the village potter, first waving the grain and white cocks over the head of the child to be protected. At the same time black dogs are fed, fowls, pigs, goats, and cocoa-nuts are offered. An adult who has had small-pox must let a pig loose for Sítala, or he will be attacked again. If an epidemic of small-pox appears in the village, the goddess is punished by the cessation of all worship and offerings, but so long as the disease is absent nothing is too good for her. She is easily frightened or deceived, and when a woman has lost a son by small pox, and fears that another may be attacked, it is desirable to let the goddess understand that the second son is of no value, and, as evidence of this, to send him round the village in a dust-pan, or to dress him in old rags borrowed from the neighbours.

Everything is to be feared from the malevolent dead. A man who has died a violent death, or without sons, is dangerous, and it is prudent to erect a shrine to him. One of these ghosts of great fame in the Delhi territory is Teja. He was taking milk to his aged mother when a snake bit him in the nose. He begged to be allowed to take the milk to her, and then came back to be again bitten and killed. These evil ghosts are especially dangerous to women and children after eating sweet-meats, and a pinch of salt should be taken as a precaution. They are fond of going down your throat when you yawn. They cannot set foot on the ground, so it is wise in haunted places to sleep on the ground and not on a bed.

The Evil eye is more common and dangerous than the gettatura

⁸ I have taken these illustrations of prevalent superstitions from Mr. Ibbetson's *Report on the Census of the Punjab*, from Sir Henry Elliot's *Races of the North-Western Provinces*, and from the *Report on the Settlement of Bareilly* by Mr. Moens. I have often given the words of the original authors, but so much has been omitted or altered that I have not marked all my borrowings as quotations, and it has therefore to be explained that nearly all that is said on this subject is due to the authorities that I have named, and especially to Mr. Ibbetson's most interesting Report [Strachey's note].

of Naples. Its malignant influence may even be exercised by inanimate objects. I have myself been officially obliged, in one of the Hill districts, to interfere on behalf of a considerable population, to give protection against a small white house newly built in a conspicuous situation, the owner of which sorrowfully admitted that, through no fault of his own, it was undoubtedly bringing ruin on his neighbours. Sir Alfred Lyall has given examples of the worship of inanimate objects of strange appearance. I knew a case in which the sight of a distant mountain peak of peculiar form had caused for many years the complete abandonment of a village and of a rich tract of cultivated land. Good and bad omens are innumerable. Two water-pots, one on the top of the other, are especially fortunate if they be left to the right in passing; and the same rule is applicable to cows and antelopes; a snake, on the other hand, should be passed on the left. The superstitious ceremonies observed at births and marriages are curious.

‘If,’ writes Mr. Ibbetson, ‘a boy be born, a net is hung over the doorway, a chain stuck on to the wall, and a fire lighted on the threshold, which is kept up night and day to prevent evil spirits from passing. The swaddling-clothes should be borrowed from another person’s house. On the night of the sixth day the whole household sits up and watches over the child, for on that day his destiny is determined, especially as to immunity from small-pox. If he go hungry on that day he will be stingy all his life. None of these precautions are taken on the birth of a girl.’

No agricultural operations can be carried on without the performance of certain ceremonies, and the superstitions connected with them are endless. I will give one or two illustrations. This is the manner in which the planting of sugar-cane is commenced in Rohilkhand. When the ground is ready, the plough is worshipped and decorated. This goes first, and is followed in the same furrow by a second. Behind this comes the sower, wearing silver ornaments, a necklace of flowers, a red mark on his forehead, and lamp-black on his eyelids. Before beginning his work he is regaled with ghee and sweetmeats. He strews the bits of sugar-cane into the furrow at intervals of about a foot. He is called the elephant.

Behind him comes a second man, called the crow, who picks up any bits which have not fallen into the furrow. A third man, called the donkey, supplies the elephant with sugar-cane from a basket tied to his waist. It is a fortunate omen if a man on horseback comes into the field while this is going on. When the work is done, all who have been engaged in it go to the house of the cultivator of the field and have a dinner, composed of pulse, milk and spices, rice, and cakes of unleavened bread. In some districts, the wife of the elephant follows with a ball of cotton. At some unexpected moment he turns on her, and after a sham contest bears her to the ground. The cotton, being forced out of her hand, spreads upon the ground, and the parties present exclaim, 'May our sugar-cane grow and spread like this cotton.' Not the least essential part of this and all other proceedings is that the Brahmans must be fed and proper offerings given to them.

Mr. Ibbetson gives some examples of the superstitions regarding cattle. Nothing connected with them, such as butter or leather, must be bought or sold on Saturday or Sunday. The manner in which, when cattle-plague first appears in a village, it can be cast out, and transferred to the next village in the East, is curious. All fieldwork, grinding, and cooking are stopped on Saturday morning, and on Sunday night a procession takes a buffalo skull, a lamb, sticks of the siras tree, butter-milk, fire, and sacred grass to the boundary, over which they are thrown, while a gun is fired three times to frighten away the disease. 'Last year a man was killed in an affray resulting from an attempt to transfer the plague in this manner. A villager in Gurgáon once captured the cattle-plague in its material shape, and would not let it go till it promised never to remain where he or his descendants were present; and his progeny are still sent for when murrain has fastened on a village, to walk round it and call on the plague to fulfil its contract.'

Great power over milch-cattle is exercised by the Singhs, or snake-gods, and the milk of the eleventh day after calving is sacred to them. These Singhs have a widespread reputation among the villagers of Northern India. Those best known are the black, green, and grey Singhs; but dead men have a way of becoming snakes, so their numbers multiply, and shrines must be erected to them. If a peasant sees a snake he will salute it, and if it bites him he or his heirs will build a shrine to prevent similar occurrences in future.

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